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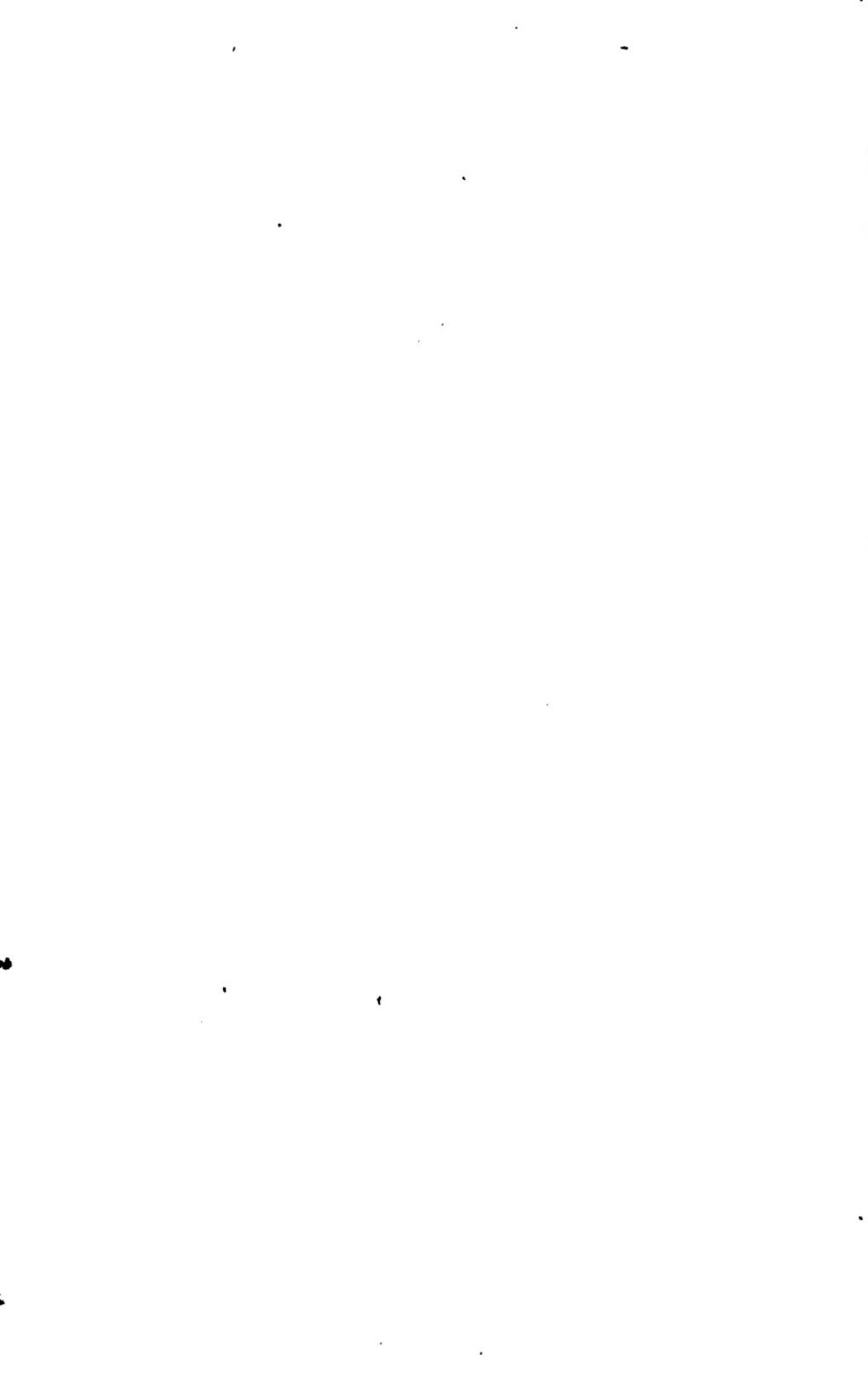
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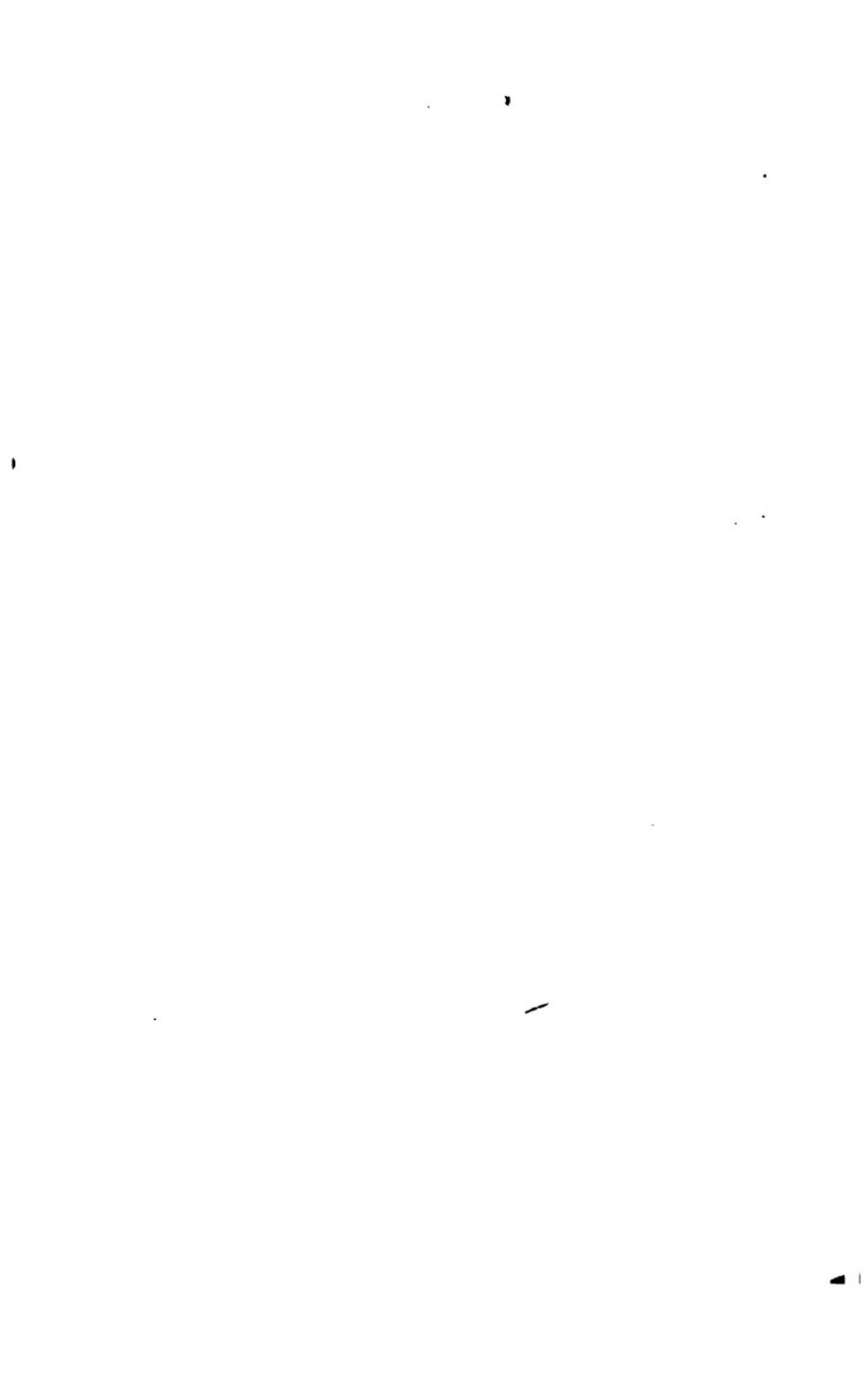




Hannah S. Lyman.

Age 23 years







# MORNING AND EVENING EXERCISES,

FOR

JULY, AUGUST, SEPTEMBER,

BY

WILLIAM JAY.

"Thy word is everlasting truth;  
How pure is every page!  
That Holy Book shall guide our youth,  
And well support our age."

WATTS.

"The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord." JEROME.

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## MORNING AND EVENING EXERCISES.

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JULY 1.—MORNING.

"I beseech thee, shew me thy glory." Exod. xxxiii. 18.

THIS prayer was not entirely proper. It would seem that Moses desired some visible display of Deity, or some kind of representation of Him. And so far it was refused. "He said, Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live. Behold, there is a place by me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock: and it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a clift of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by: and I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts: but my face shall not be seen."

Here we perceive our weakness, even physically considered. How little can we sustain! When Daniel only saw an angel, he fell into a deep sleep: John, at the sight of Him, on whose bosom he had often leaned, fell at his feet as dead. Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God. Neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.

We cannot go on well till God has gained our full confidence. Let us never suppose that he denies us any thing from an insufficiency to give, or from a grudging disposition. "He that spared not his own

Son, but delivered him up for us all: how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" The very same principle that leads him to give us some things, induces him to withhold others—a regard to our safety and happiness.

Had the Lord yielded all the wish of Moses, Moses would have been destroyed upon the spot. He therefore rejects what was evil in it, but grants what was good—"I will make all my goodness pass before thee; and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy." We are *morally defective*; and our infirmities appear even in our prayers. We know not what to pray for as we ought. What would be the consequence, if all our desires were accomplished? It is our privilege that God is as wise as he is kind. He knows what is really good for us; and answers us not according to our wishes, but our wants; and according to what we ourselves *should only* pray for, if we were alive to our real welfare, and always knew what it includes.

Thus qualified, we cannot do better than to make this prayer our own, and desire God to shew us his glory. For he alone can do it efficiently. As the sun can only be seen by his own shining, so God can only be known by his own revealing: in his light we see light. But we have every encouragement we could desire, if we seek the discovery from him. If any lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him. Then shall ye know if ye follow on to know the Lord.

Let us pray, therefore, that he would shew us more of his glory. More of it in his works. More of it in

his ways. More of it in his dispensations and ordinances. And, above all, more of it in the face of Jesus Christ.

Nor let us ever think we do not stand in need of more. For who expressed this desire? A man who had been indulged already beyond any of his fellow-creatures! Yet, after communications the most deep and extensive; after being inspired to write Scripture; after beholding God in the burning bush; after talking with him as a man talketh with his friend—so far is he from being satisfied, that his soul is drawn forth after more acquaintance with him; and he, even he cries—I beseech thee, shew me thy glory. Behold another instance. Paul, after all his intimacies with the Lord Jesus for many years, cries—"That I may know him!" But who is Moses? Who is Paul?—"Which things the angels desire to look into."

Yet some are so perfectly indifferent to the subject of this prayer, that *they* say unto God, Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. Spiritual darkness is the forerunner and pledge of eternal. If our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost. Because they are a people of no understanding, therefore he that made them will not have mercy on them; and he that formed them will shew them no favour.

## JULY 1.—EVENING.

"By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff."

HEB. xi. 21.

"PRECIOUS in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." No wonder therefore that he graciously appoints the time, the place, and the manner of it;

that he honours it with his special presence; and calls upon us to make it the subject of our contemplation: "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace." For this purpose he has often mentioned it in his word, and has sometimes recorded it with circumstances the most striking and improving. Let us convey ourselves into Egypt, find out Goshen, inquire for the house of Jacob, and enter his chamber of sickness. It will be found none other than the house of God, and the gate of heaven. He is "a dying:" and observe how he dies.

First; he "*leans upon the top of his staff.*" Thus he looks like a pilgrim. Had he recourse to this action to aid such an impression? The Jews were to eat the passover with their staves in their hand: and we should observe every ordinance, form every connexion, enjoy every advantage, as those who have heard the voice, Arise, and depart hence; for this is not your rest. Abraham wished to preserve the recollection of this; and therefore he "sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God;" and it was thus "they confessed themselves to be strangers and pilgrims upon earth." Give me, says the dying traveller, my staff.

—Was this staff the same he spoke of when he was returning from Haran; "With my staff I passed over Jordan, and now I am become two bands"? If so, and the thing is very probable, how many feelings would this companion of all his journeys revive! For after a length of time even inanimate things draw from us a strange kind of regard, and affect us, if not

by themselves, yet by their associations.—But it was an instance of his bodily decline and infirmity. He whose constitution had enabled him to bear such travels and fatigues is now reduced to the weakness of infancy and dependence; and leans upon the top of his staff. “The glory of young men is their strength;” but let them remember their Creator in the days of their youth; for the evil days will come when they shall say we have no pleasure in them; when they that look out of the windows shall be darkened, and the strong men shall bow themselves, and the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the grasshopper be a burden, because man goeth to his long home.—It was also a proof of his conscientiousness in duty. He would place himself in the best posture of devotion his infirmities would admit. We are to glorify God in our bodies as well as in our spirits; and though he does not bind us down to any corporeal forms, yet every thing in his service should be expressive of reverence and godly fear. The Seraphim veil their faces with their wings. Our Lord kneeled three times in the garden. So Jacob, aged as he was, and under the debility of approaching dissolution, when he would adore God, rose upon his knees, though he was obliged to seek support. Think of this, ye who, in full health and vigour, instead of kneeling or standing, sit during the devotion of the sanctuary; and see how far you come short of the self-denial and godliness of this patriarch.

Secondly, He “worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff.” He had been trained up in the nurture and admonition of the “fear of his father Isaac;” and had long walked before him. But now he was ending the worship of him on earth, to join in the worship of

him in heaven that would never end. This worship doubtless included confession. Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin? Some talk of looking back upon a well-spent life. A good man, if he has been distinguished from others, knows who has made him to differ; and sees in the review of his obedience a thousand imperfections which humble him, and prevent all confidence in the flesh. He feels that he is an unprofitable servant, and says, in his last approach still more than in all his former ones, "I come, trusting not in my own righteousness, but in thy manifold and great mercies." It had also in it thanksgiving. He had experienced many personal and relative troubles; but out of them all the Lord had delivered him. The angry storms of life were now blown over, and a serene evening had arrived. He had escaped the difficulties and dangers of a tiresome road, and was now in sight of the journey's end, and of his father's house. It is easy to imagine the grateful emotions of his mind when he remembered his flight from the face of his brother, the vision of Beth-el, and the promise of God that he would be with him, and keep him in all places, and never leave him nor forsake him. All this had now been accomplished. "Bless the Lord," would he say, "Bless the Lord, O my soul: and, all that is within me, bless his holy Name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits." It contained also prayer. He would implore mercy and grace to help in this time of need: for he had yet to die. O my God strengthen me this once. "O God, be not far from me: O my God, make haste for my help. O God, thou hast taught me from my youth: and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works. Now

also when I am old and greyheaded, O God; forsake me not; until I have shewed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power to every one that is to come." And he prayed not only for himself, but for others, especially those of his own house. For,

Thirdly, he "*blessed both the sons of Joseph;*" and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff." The affair is recorded in the book of Genesis with the most touching simplicity. Understanding that his father was sick, Joseph hastens to visit him: and he takes his two sons with him. It was wise in him to shew these youths, who had been living in splendour, such a solemn scene, and to place them under the dying benediction of this man of God. Jacob was overjoyed at their arrival, and said, "Who are these? And Joseph said unto his father, They are my sons, whom God hath given me in this place. And he said, Bring them, I pray thee, unto me, and I will bless them." The feelings of men towards their grandchildren are commonly very powerful: but every thing here tended to increase affection. Manasseh and Ephraim were the offering of Joseph; and Joseph was his favourite son, endeared by his loss and sufferings; he was also the son of his beloved Rachel. Oh could he have seen the image and representatives of Rachel—*her* son and *her* grandsons! "But the eyes of Israel were dim for age, so that he could not see. And Joseph brought them near unto him; and he kissed them, and embraced them. And he blessed Joseph, and said, God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long unto this day, the Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; and let my name be named on them, and the name of my

fathers Abraham and Isaac ; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth. And he blessed them that day, saying, In thee shall Israel bless, saying, God make thee as Ephraim and Manasseh. And he set Ephraim before Manasseh." Let us endeavour to be useful as long as we continue here, and do good, not only living but dying. It will be well if we are able to say something that shall bless survivors. Parting words are peculiarly impressive and memorable. Children who have disregarded the living counsel of a father have followed his dying admonitions : and the commendations of religion which Christians have expressed, and the comforts of the Holy Ghost which they have experienced, in the final hour, have frequently rendered their departure a blessing to many. It has encouraged the fearful. It has convinced the unbelieving. It has induced even a Balaam to say, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his."

Finally ; "*By faith* he blessed both the sons of Joseph ; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff." We allow there was something extraordinary in this transaction. Jacob was under a degree of Divine inspiration. This appears in the manner of his blessing these children : for he not only poured forth the tenderness of his heart towards them, but he admitted them, though born in Egypt, into his family and the congregation of Israel ; and constituted them, though their mother was a Gentile, heads of tribes, like his own offspring ; and overruled the claims of seniority, and pronounced their future number and prosperity. Yet all his faith on this occasion was not of this extraordinary nature. The Apostle does not speak of him as a seer so much as a saint. He would

tell us that he brought forth fruit in old age: that, while the outward man perished, the inward man was renewed: that, while the eyes of his flesh were dim, the eyes of his understanding were enlightened: that he saw and acknowledged not only the God of providence, but the God of all grace: that he extended his views beyond the bounds of time and sense: that he recognized in Canaan a better, even a heavenly country: that he hailed in his seed the Shiloh that was to come, and in whom all the families of the earth would be blessed. What would this dying faith have been, had he only proved the organ of Divine omniscience concerning things to come? Balaam "had his eyes open, and heard the words of God, and knew the knowledge of the Most High:" and he said, "I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh." But Jacob was an heir of promise: Jacob could say, "I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord." And this is the grand thing—This is what we shall all want when, like him, we are "a dying." When heart and flesh fail, when we are leaving all that is dear below, and entering an eternal state, we shall require all the views, all the influences, all the appropriations of faith. We have heard more than one saying, while engaged in it, "Dying is hard work." We shall all find it so, if left to the resources of nature and reason only. But faith can make dying work easy work. "I can smile on death," said Dr. Grosvenor, "because my Saviour smiles on me." Simeon, with the babe in the arms of his flesh, and the consolation of Israel in the arms of his faith, said, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy

salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people."

O thou Author of all good! inspire my soul with this all-important principle, to make me meet for every season and every condition. May the life that I now live in the flesh be by the faith of the Son of God. And may I finish my course with joy, and be able to say, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

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## JULY 2.—MORNING.

"From whence they went to Beer: that is the well whereof the Lord spake unto Moses, Gather the people together, and I will give thee water. Then Israel sang this song, Spring up, O well; sing ye unto it: The princes digged the well, the nobles of the people digged it, by the direction of the lawgiver, with their staves. And from the Wilderness they went to Mattanah: and from Mattanah to Nahalial: and from Nahalial to Bamoth." Numb. xxi. 16—19.

BEER was a pleasing station to the Jews; and it is a very instructive one to us. They here came into a dry place; but they neither rebelled nor murmured against God, or his servant Moses.

See, first, How easily the Lord can supply the wants of his people. "Gather the people together, and I will give them water." Not only is every good gift and every perfect gift from above; but all our temporal comforts come from the hand of God. We are not to look for miracles; but we may be assured that his word can be accomplished without them:

"For sooner all nature shall change, than one of God's promises fail." And he has said, "Thy bread shall be given thee; and thy water shall be sure." And what he has promised, he is able also to perform. Let us not limit the Holy One of Israel. Nothing is too hard for him. He can turn the shadow of death into the morning. Jehovah-jireh! The Lord will provide. "When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them. I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water."

Secondly. See how want endears our blessings.— "Then Israel sang this song, Spring up, O well; sing ye unto it." We feel unthankful for this precious fluid, because it is so common, and we have never been deprived of it. Had we gone several days in a wilderness without it, how should we have exulted and praised God at the sight of a refreshing supply! It is thus, by their removal or suspension, we are taught the worth of our comforts. How is liberty prized and enjoyed after bondage? and health after sickness? and spring after winter? and morning after night? We become indifferent to the means of grace. By a change of residence, or by accident, or disease, we are deprived of the privileges of the sanctuary. Then we remember these things, and pour out our souls in us: for we had gone with the multitude; we went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and gladness, with a multitude that kept holy day. Oh, says David, when he was faint, Oh that one would give me a drink of the water of the

well that is by the gate of Bethlehem! And were we equally athirst, spiritually, how should we long for the well of salvation, and say,

“Thou, of life, the fountain art :  
Freely let me take of Thee :  
Spring Thou up within my heart,  
Rise to all eternity!”

Thirdly. His agency does not exclude or supersede our instrumentality. “The princes digged the well, the nobles of the people digged it, by the direction of the lawgiver, with their staves.” God filled it; but they digged it. This was their part. This they could do: and why should God have exempted them from it? He gives the increase; but Paul must plant and Apollos water. He furnishes the wind; but we are to spread the sails. He gives; but we gather. Prayer and diligence, dependence and activity, harmonize in the Scripture, and are only inconsistent in the crude minds of ignorant and foolish men. Paul makes divine influence, not an excuse for the neglect of means, but a motive and encouragement to the use of them—“Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.”

Fourthly. However pleasing any of our present stations are, we must, if we are the Israel of God, leave them. “And from the wilderness they went to Mattanah: and from Mattanah to Nahaliel: and from Nahaliel to Bamoth.” The part they left is called, indeed, the Wilderness; and so it was; but it was good for them to be there. There they had witnessed proofs of the power and goodness of God;

and there they had enjoyed a time of refreshment from his presence. But they had compassed the place long enough ; and, decamping from this loved scene, had to journey on in the Desert. Here, also, Christians have their indulgences. But these are designed, not to induce them to tarry, but to encourage them to advance. In the midst of their enjoyments a voice cries, Arise ye, and depart hence ; for this is not your rest.

These people would have been the more willing to move—because they knew they were moving towards Canaan, a better country, the end and aim of their journey ; and—because they were under the direction of God, as their guide, and who would never leave them nor forsake them. So it should be with us.

## JULY 2.—EVENING.

"And he looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts." MARK iii. 5.

EVERY thing in the temper and conduct of our Lord and Saviour is worthy attention ; and the fact before us will be found very instructive and useful.

We see that the passions are not evil in themselves. They are inherent in our very nature. It is therefore impossible to divest ourselves of them ; and if it were possible, we should only reduce ourselves to mere reasoning machines, and unimpressible intelligences. The passions are the springs and impulses of action. All that religion does is, to govern and regulate them, and to furnish each of them with an appropriate sphere, object, and agency.

We learn that we may be angry and sin not. This

is the case when we are angry at sin. This he who was the Holy One of God felt and expressed. It is our duty and honour to resemble him; and it is a proof that we are of one spirit, if what offended him offends us, and we cannot bear them that are evil.

Yet anger should be always attended with grief. We should grieve to see men suffering, but we should grieve more to see them sinning. We should feel more to see a man proud than poor, to see him led captive by vice than laid in irons. No character is so truly pitiable as the wretch who is destroying himself for ever. David felt this, and said, I beheld the transgressors and was grieved. Jesus was here grieved at the hardness of their hearts. Fools only make a mock of sin. To laugh at a man who is inflicting upon his soul the torments of hell, is far more cruel than to turn into sport and merriment the tortures of a fellow-creature on the rack. Paul, in his climax, considers our "having pleasure" in the sins of others a greater instance of depravity than "doing them" ourselves; and the reason is, because we may have powerful temptations to the one, whereas the other results from pure congeniality: nothing shews what we are more than that which can yield us pleasure. So, on the other hand, the purest grief is that which we feel for the sins of others. Selfish respect may have some place in concern for our own sins, because they endanger us; but we shall not be punished for the sins of others. When therefore we suffer for them, we sorrow after a godly sort; we are affected with sin as sin; and evince the truest benevolence. And so pleasing to God is such a disposition, that in times of public calamity he ordered "a mark" of

preservation to be imposed “upon the foreheads of the men that sighed and cried for all the abominations that are done in the midst of the land.”

In our Lord we see the finest moral harmony arising from the perfect union of diverse feelings and affections. His zeal was not without discretion; his prudence was not without fervour. His authority dignified his condescension; his kindness softened and endeared his power. His compassion was not without censure; his censure was not without pity. He distinguished between the sin and the sinner; and at once displayed his displeasure and his distress—“He looked round about on them *with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts.*” So should it be with us.

Let us beware that our tenderness does not degenerate into connivance at evil. Adam was too complaisant, even to a wife, when he refused not the forbidden fruit, though presented by Eve. And what judgments did Eli draw down upon himself and family, because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not! The Scripture does not speak with commendation of “men in whose mouth are no reproofs.” Yea, it says, “Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him.”

Let us also take heed that our faithfulness does not deprive us of the meekness and gentleness of Jesus Christ, or annihilate our concern for the offender in our hatred of the offence. Some Christians are sadly defective here. It might be supposed that they had never read the injunction; “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering

thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."

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## JULY 3.—MORNING.

"Faint—" JUDGES viii. 4.

WHAT war is there that has in it nothing to depress? Nothing to animate? And that does not furnish a diversity of feelings in those who carry it on?

Christians resemble these followers of Gideon and pursuers of the Amalekites—Faint, yet pursuing.

Yes—while engaged in this good fight of faith, they may be *faint*. We need not wonder at this, if we consider the enemies they have to vanquish. These are, bodily appetites; filthiness of spirit; a depraved nature; all sin and error; the present evil world; the Devil, and his angels. If we also consider the qualities of their adversaries; their number; their malignity; their power; their policy; their success; for they have cast down many mighty; yea, many strong men have been slain by them. When we think of the heroes, the statesmen, the princes, the philosophers, the divines, and all the myriads they have enslaved and destroyed, who is not ready to tremble, and exclaim, "I shall one day perish!"

There is also the length of the service. It is not for a season only, but for life. We are not allowed to receive any proposals of peace. We cannot enter into a truce—no, not even to bury the dead—Let the dead bury their dead. We are to fight on through summer and winter—by day and night—in every situation and condition. He that endureth to the

end, the same only shall be saved. In conversion we throw away the scabbard; in death only we lay down the sword. While we are here, something is still to be done; something still to be avoided—in company—in solitude—in health—in sickness. And is it nothing to watch in all things! To pray without ceasing! In every thing to give thanks! To be always abounding in the work of the Lord!

There are also occasional difficulties too common to be overlooked. It is easy to suppose a few of them. What marvel if the soldier is faint—when the road is rough and thorny—and the weather is warm and oppressive—and he hungers and thirsts for want of seasonable refreshments and supplies, which are interrupted, if not cut off—and he feels a loss of strength, occasioned by a wound from without, or an indisposition from within? Is this talking parables? There is not a Christian on earth whose religious experience will not easily explain it.

And if this, therefore, be *my* experience—let me remember that there is nothing ominous, nor even peculiar in it. Every subject of divine grace is well acquainted with the heart's bitterness—and *must* know it—or much of the Scripture could not be applied to him, either in a way of description, or comfort.

—And let me be thankful that to will is present with me, though how to perform that which is good I find not. If I faint, I do not *flee*. Faint—yet PURSUING.

## JULY 8.—EVENING.

"—Yet pursuing." JUDGES viii. 4.

THE life and experience of the Christian are full of contrasts. He resembles the bush of Moses, which was seen burning, but not consumed. And his language is, Cast down, but not destroyed ; sorrowful, yet always rejoicing ; as dying, and, behold, we live. We are now viewing him as a soldier. In our last page, we saw him faint : but we shall now find him, amidst all that is grievous, feeling no disposition to give up. Faint—yet *pursuing*.

And there is much to encourage and animate him. There is something in himself, and which is nothing less than a principle of divine grace. Every thing else will decline when it meets with its proper temptation. Natural and merely moral resources are as the morning cloud, and the early dew, which soon passeth away. But we are confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in us, will perform it. That which is divine is durable, is invincible. That which is born of God, overcometh the world.

There is also much to encourage him in his Cause. It is a good warfare. It will bear examination. Conscience entirely approves of it. Angels applaud it. There is therefore nothing to make us waver, or hesitate. Every thing in the conflict feeds courage. We *ought* to engage and persevere. It is the cause of truth, of righteousness, of glory—of real glory. It would be more honourable to be foiled in this cause than to conquer in any other.

There is also much in his Leader and Commander.

Some chiefs have so attached and inspired their troops, that they would plunge into any enterprise, or follow them into any danger. It was said proverbially at Rome, that it was unbecoming a Roman soldier to fear while Cæsar was alive. It is much more unworthy a Christian soldier to fear while Christ is alive; for, because, says he, I live, ye shall live also. When Antigonus heard some of his troops rather despondingly say, How many are coming against us? he asked—But, my soldiers, how many do you reckon me for? And whenever we think of our foes, and then of the Captain of our salvation, we may truly say, More are they that be with us than they that be with them. Greater is He that is in us than he that is in the world. Who goes before us? Who teaches our hands to war, and our fingers to fight? Who provides for us? Who renews our strength? What limits have his wisdom and power? Did he ever lose an action yet? or a single private in his army?

And let me think of the certainty of the issue. Fear unnerves: but it would make a hero of a coward to assure him in the conflict that he should overcome. This can rarely or never be done in other contentions: for nothing is so doubtful as the result of battle. Prudence, therefore, says, Let not him that putteth on the harness boast himself like him that putteth it off—But the Christian enters the field under peculiar advantage. However trying or lengthened the struggle may be, he fights not uncertainly. Yea, in all these things we are more than conquerors!

For what will be the result of success? What do other victors gain? How precarious, how unsatisfying, how poor, how mean, the rewards of the world's

warriors, compared with the acquisitions of the good soldiers of Jesus Christ! He that overcometh shall inherit all things!

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## JULY 4.—MORNING.

"Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim."

EXOD. xvii. 8.

THOUGH God had relieved the people in their pressure when there was no water for them to drink, yet they had offended and provoked him by their rebellious murmurings. Moses therefore, to perpetuate the memory of their guilt, as well as of their deliverance, gave a new name to the place: "He called it Massah and Meribah, because of the chiding of the children of Israel, saying, Is the Lord among us or not?"—And may we not suppose that the present attack upon them was permitted of God, to rebuke and correct them for their sin? For men are his instruments: he controls them when they act most freely; and he employs them righteously when they act against us unjustly. He can also punish *them*, even when they fulfil his pleasure; for he judges them according to their motives and designs, and not according to the effects their actions produce by his overruling interposition. "O Assyrian! the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation. I will send him against an hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets. Howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so; but it is in his heart to destroy

and cut off nations not a few. Therefore shall the Lord, the Lord of hosts, send among his fat ones leanness ; and under his glory he shall kindle a burning like the burning of fire."

These Amalekites have been supposed to be the descendants of Esau : but we read of them in the days of Chedorlaomer ; and Balaam calls Amalek "the first of the nations." They possessed at this time a large tract of country, extending from the confines of Idumea to the *western* shore of the Red Sea. When therefore Israel crossed over, they were obliged to approach their borders : but they offered them no injury or provocation ; and instead of invading their territory, they were turning away from it. We know not what actuated Amalek to assault them ; whether it was the hope of plunder, or a wish for military renown, or pure maliciousness. But from the book of Deuteronomy it appears that his conduct was as mean as it was wicked, and as dastardly as it was cruel : for, not daring to engage them in front, he waited his opportunity, and smote the hindmost of them, even all that were feeble behind them ; and when they were faint and weary, alike incapable of resistance or flight.

The detail of the action on the part of Israel is worthy our attention. They were not only justified in having recourse to arms, but they wisely managed the measure. Though they were a people conducted by the Almighty, who had *miraculously* saved them in Egypt, and delivered them at the Red Sea, and provided them with flesh at Zin, and water where they now were, nothing supernatural is here thought of. Miracles were never intended to be employed where ordinary means were at hand, and sufficient for the

purpose. “Moses said unto Joshua, Choose us east men, and go out, fight with Amalek: to-morrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand. So Joshua did as Moses had said to him, and fought with Amalek: and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill.” Here we have a fine example of activity and reliance: the sword in the hand of Joshua; the rod in the hand of Moses: the host fighting in the vale as if every thing depended on their strenuousness; the interceder pleading on the hill, as if all was to be accomplished by Divine agency. To use means without neglecting trust in God, and to trust in God without omitting the use of means—this is the test of a proper state of mind in religion; this is the union recommended by our Lord and his Apostle. “Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation:” “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God which worketh in you to will and to do of his good pleasure.”

Behold Moses and Joshua on this occasion in their respective departments; and see in what various and suitable ways God qualifies and employs his servants. We should not oppose good and useful men to each other, or even improperly compare them together. We should view them all in reference to their commission, their work, and their adaptation—Then they are equally respectable. Each has his own calling and work. It would be absurd to extol the valour of Joshua at the expense of piety in Moses; or to extol the piety of Moses at the expense of valour in Joshua. It was not for want of courage that Moses prayed; or for want of devotion that Joshua fought—It was the same spirit that actuated the suppliant and the

warrior. But "as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another." If all were the eye, where were the hearing? and if all were the ear, where were the seeing? It is enough for the eye to see, and the ear to hear, and the foot to walk. It would not be for the beauty and welfare of society that every excellency should be found in the same individuals; and it will always be in vain to look for it.

As nothing like our artillery was then used in fight, a person might safely place himself near enough to survey the scene—Thus Moses was stationed on the brow of a rising ground just by, and within view—And how encouraging must it have been to Israel, as they advanced to battle, to look up and see him with his arms extended, and holding in his hand the signal of omnipotence! "Yonder," would they say, "yonder is lifted up the wonder-working rod which has performed so many exploits for us. Yonder is the man who has power with God, and can prevail, imploring for us succour and success."

"And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed: and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed." This was to shew him that the excellency of the power was of God, and not of them; and that means, however good and proper in themselves, are nothing without the concurring agency of Heaven.

But where are the knees that never tremble, and the hands that never hang down? In another world we shall serve God as we ought, and according to our desire; but in our present state, and while we have

these bodies of clay, we cannot do the things that we would. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. We are not weary of his service, but we are soon weary in it, and need relief. "Moses' hands were heavy ; and they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon ; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side ; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun." Here we learn of what use we may be to each other. Not only did Moses help Joshua, but Aaron and Hur helped Moses. Two are better than one : and a threefold cord is not quickly broken. We cannot be independent of each other. We may often feel our obligations to those who are in many respects our inferiors. Jonathan was not equal to his friend David in religious attainment and experience : yet he went to him in the wood, and strengthened his hand in God.

Need we wonder at the result of the conflict ? Joshua fought under many disadvantages. His men had not seen war. They were raw, undisciplined, and ill-armed. They had been living in bondage. Slavery renders its subjects mean and pusillanimous. Having been treated as brutes, it requires time to make them feel that they are men. It is freedom that nourishes magnanimity and courage—Yet "Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword"—for the Lord fought for Israel. So shall all thine enemies perish, O God ; while they that love thee shall be as the sun when he goeth forth in his strength.

## JULY 4.—EVENING.

"A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench." MATT. xii. 20.

THE terms of the imagery require some little explanation. What means a bruised reed? Some take it for a musical pipe made of reed, and formerly used by shepherds. Such an instrument could never be very enchanting; but when "bruised," would sound inharmoniously and harshly, and would probably be broken to pieces and thrown aside. Others take it for a reed stalk, commonly found in marshy soils. This in its best estate is slender and frail, but when bruised is unable to bear any weight, is unavailing for any useful purpose, and seems fit for nothing but the fire.—And what is "smoking flax?" Here, says Campbell, by a figure of speech, the cause is put for the effect: the smoking flax means the wick of the torch, or candle, made of this material: he therefore renders it "the smoking taper." In this case the flame is extinct; but the tow retaining some particles of fire, sends forth no useful light, but only offensive effluvia. All this is obviously metaphor. But it will not be necessary to endeavour to trace the analogy in various and distinct articles of resemblance. It is enough to seize the spirit and design of the figures. This bruised reed, and this smoking flax, mean certain characters to be found, not in the world—there is *no* real religion there—but in the Church. There are persons of very weak and defective attainments in the divine life. They may be described as defective in knowledge, and obscurely acquainted with the things of the Spirit. Or as weak in faith,

and full of doubts and fears. Or as afflicted with outward troubles and inward conflicts, while the consolations of God are small with them. Or as the subjects of moral infirmities appearing in their resolutions, temper, and conduct, and concurring to disqualify them for glorifying God, and serving their generation.

Yet, low as they are in the eyes of others—and they are lower in their own, the Saviour does not overlook or despise them: “A bruised reed shall he not break, the smoking flax shall he not quench.” His regard is only held forth negatively. But will he do nothing more than not destroy, or not injure them? Much more is implied than is expressed. The assurance is, that he will sustain, strengthen, and confirm the bruised reed; and re-kindle the smoking flax, and cause it to burn clear and bright. And that this is the design is obvious from the delightful addition in which we are told that the work, though opposed, shall be rendered triumphant, “till he send forth judgment unto victory.” So truly was it said of him in prophecy, “He shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young.” So well did he say of himself, “He hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, and to comfort all that mourn.”

We may view the fact in four periods. First, The period before his incarnation. His “goings forth were of old from everlasting.” It was he who appeared to the patriarchs; but hear the testimony of a dying Jacob, whose failings had been many: “God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long unto this day —The *Angel* which redeemed me from all Israel, bless

the lads." He was with the Church in the wilderness. And how is his conduct towards them characterized? "He, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity, and destroyed them not: yea, many a time turned he his anger away, and did not stir up all his wrath. For he remembered that they were but flesh; a wind that passeth away, and cometh not again." "In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old."

The second period takes in the days of his flesh. For three-and-thirty years he dwelt among men, and they beheld his glory, and saw him "full of grace and truth." He had compassion on the multitude, because they were as sheep having no shepherd, and he taught them many things. What was his language? "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." He saw some faith in the nobleman who applied to him on the behalf of his son; but it was so weak, that he thought our Saviour could not raise him when dead, and that he could not even recover him while living, without his bodily presence, ignorant of the almightyess of his word. But he yields to his desire; "Sir, come down, ere my child die." What dull scholars were his disciples! But he endured their waywardness, and taught them as they were able to bear it. He tenderly apologized for the three disciples in the garden, when, though he had enjoined them, and was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death, they could not watch with him one hour—"The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." When he was apprehended

they all forsook him and fled—Yet he loved them unto the end—and beyond it too—

Observe the third period, the season that elapsed between his resurrection and his ascension. He rose with the same heart with which he died. He instantly appeared to Mary Magdalene who was weeping, and comforted her. He sent a message to his cowardly and wavering followers, announcing that he was risen. He mentioned Peter, who was inconsolable, by name. He joined Cleopas and his companion as they were going to Emmaus, and revived their dying faith and hope. He entered the room where the eleven were assembled, and said to their drooping, fearful hearts, “Peace be unto you.” He accommodated himself with the most surprising condescension to the wish of Thomas, and set his scruples at rest. He took leave of them all, and was parted from them in the very act of blessing them.

The fourth period followed his return to heaven. Out of sight, is often out of mind with us. The chief butler on his advancement forgot Joseph. Years elapsed after he was enthroned before David inquired after the family of his friend Jonathan. But Jesus remembered his followers as soon as he came into his kingdom. He immediately sent them another Comforter. He was touched with the feeling of their infirmities; and appeared in the presence of God for them. He was seen of the dying Stephen in glory; and stood by and strengthened Paul when before Nero. And when he addressed the Seven Churches in Asia, and justly reproved their faults, with what readiness and kindness did he notice and commend the least degree of excellence! Let us take what he said to the

church of Philadelphia, and remember that he is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. "I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my Name."

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## JULY 5.—MORNING.

—“Submit yourselves to God.” JAMES iv. 7.

THIS is the great thing. This is the excellency, the essence, the proof, of religion. God is our Saviour. Our Lawgiver. Our Disposer. Under each of these characters his people are made willing to submit to him in the day of his power. And nothing but the efficiency of divine grace can influence a man cordially to resign himself to God in all these relations.

We must submit ourselves to God, as a Saviour. Here our concern with him begins. And here it must begin. We are condemned; and the first thing is, to obtain deliverance. We are diseased and dying; and the first thing we want is the physician and the remedy. When, therefore, the Jews asked our Lord, What must we do that we may work the works of God? “This,” said he, “is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.” When the jailer asked Paul and Silas what he should do to be saved, they said unto him, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.” God is a sovereign, at whose mercy we absolutely lie. We have no claims upon him; and it is wonderful that he is disposed to undertake our case at all. But he requires us to submit; and never will

allow us to prescribe. He will have the entire management of our case, or he will have nothing to do with it. And it might be supposed that there would be no great difficulty here. But men are not sensible of their condition and danger; and there is much in the nature and manner of this salvation that is not palatable to the pride of the human heart. No court is paid to our reason: but we are required to trust in a plan concerning which we have never been consulted; and even to become fools that we may be wise. However decent and moral our character has been, we must be content to enter into life in the very same way with the chief of sinners. We must renounce our own righteousness, and plead for acceptance as guilty. We must depend on another for all our strength. We must acknowledge that all we have is from the exceeding riches of his grace; and be crying to the last, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy Name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake."

But to this every awakened and humble sinner is brought. And his submission is not the effect of necessity only. It is accompanied with acquiescence and approbation. He sees a consistency and an excellency in it that delight him, while they relieve. And though he knows there is no other way, yet if there were a thousand other ways, he would turn from them all, and say, God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We must submit ourselves to Him, as the Law-giver; and be willing to live, not to the lusts of men, but to the will of God. He is only the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.

We cannot love Him till we hope in his mercy; nor run in the way of his commandments till we are freed from the load of guilt and terror—a burden too heavy for us to bear. But faith is followed by love; and love, by obedience. We are delivered from the hand of our enemies, says Zechariah; not to be lawless, but to serve Him, who has made us free, without fear, in holiness and righteousness, before him, all the days of our lives. Our obligations are infinitely increased by redeeming grace and dying love. And every believer feels them, and acknowledges that he is not his own; for he is bought with a price, and bound to glorify God in his body and in his spirit, which are God's. The love of sin, as well as the love of self, is subdued in him: and he gratefully asks, “What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards me?” “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” “He finds his yoke easy. He accounts his service to be the truest freedom. He cannot, indeed, do the things which he would; and this is his grief: but he delights in the law of God after the inward man. He would not bring down the Divine commands to his deficiencies; but longs to rise to the level of their perfection. And though he is full of complaining, it is of the servant, and not of the Master—He always speaks well of his Name; and recommends him to others.

We must also submit to Him as our Disposer, and be willing that he should choose our inheritance for us. Man naturally loves independence: he wishes to be at his own control; and to have the management of events, both as they affect others and himself. Many, also, who talk much of the providence of God, are constantly striving with it. Hence they envy the

success of their fellow-creatures ; and are discontented and repining when things do not fall out according to their mind. And, especially under their trials, they think God deals improperly with them : and so charge him foolishly or unkindly.

This temper is at least dethroned in the Christian : and he is disposed to say, “Here I am ; let him do what seemeth him good.” I am ignorant, and liable to be imposed upon : but He is all-wise ; and, by not sparing his own Son for me, he has justified the implicit confidence of my heart. Let him therefore determine the bounds of my habitation, and arrange all the events of my condition. If things are not such as I had wished and reckoned upon, I have no reason to complain. He has a right to do what he will with his own ; and he always uses it in a way the most conducive to my welfare. How often have I desired him to undertake and act for me ! And when he complies, is it for me to murmur, and dispute ; or say unto him, What doest thou ?

## JULY 5.—EVENING.

“Exceeding great and precious promises.” 2 Pet. i. 4.

Not only “great,” but “exceeding great, and precious”—Exceeding all example—exceeding all expression—exceeding all conception.

They are exceeding *great* in their *contents*. For what do these promises contain ? or rather, what do they *not* contain ? They are adapted, and they are adequate to all our woes, wants, and weaknesses. They include all things pertaining to life and godliness ; time and eternity ; grace and glory. Let me

make a selection, and judge of the whole by a part. Let me look at three of these promises—The first peculiarly the promise of the Old Testament—The second of the New—The third of both. The promised **SEED**. The promised **SPIRIT**. And the promised **LAND**. O my soul, let me dwell on each of these till I am filled with wonder; and constrained to exclaim, “O how great is the goodness which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee, which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee, before the sons of men!”

They are exceeding *precious* in their *estimation*. This does not regard all to whom these promises are addressed; for many make light of them, and neglect so great salvation. But there are others in whose experience it is fully exemplified. The promises are exceeding precious in the esteem of awakened and convinced sinners. A sense of our wants is necessary, to render all our supplies desirable and gratifying. The full soul loathes the honeycomb: but to the hungry, every bitter thing is sweet. It is owing to this that many read and hear the word of God without impression; and that the invitations of the Gospel, instead of being attractive, are rather offensive, being by implication a kind of reflection, like the offer of pardon to the innocent, or of alms to the wealthy, or of liberty to those who say, we were never in bondage. But when we see and feel that we are in the condition the dispensation is designed to relieve, the tidings will be glad tidings; they will be like cold water to a thirsty soul; they will be the break of day to one that watches for the morning. When weary and heavy laden, how precious is the voice that cries, “I will give you rest!” I am lost, but here is a Saviour.

I am sick and dying, but here is a Physician. I am guilty and weak, but here is One in whom I have righteousness and strength.

They are also exceeding precious in the esteem of real and confirmed believers. Let us go through the Scriptures, and we shall find how the saints always delighted in them. The patriarchs "embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." Job said, "I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food." David said, "I have taken thy testimonies as my heritage for ever: for they are the rejoicing of my heart." "More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb." Jeremiah said, "I found thy words and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart." The noble army of martyrs overcame by the blood of the Lamb and the word of his testimony, and loved not their lives unto the death. And now, in the soul of every Christian, "this is the victory that overcomes the world," "even" their "faith."

And no wonder they are in such estimation with them. They do not judge of them by report, but from experience. To a sense of want, they have added the relish of enjoyment: and therefore, as new-born babes, they desire the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby, having tasted that the Lord is gracious. They have tried these promises, and can trust them. They repair to them as to wells of salvation from which they have derived refreshment in many a fainting hour. They have had proofs, blessed proofs, of their influence and efficacy —First in preserving them from despair, in bringing

peace into their troubled consciences, and enabling them to joy in God under a sense of their guilt, unworthiness, and imperfections. Secondly, in supporting them amidst all the trials of life. For where is the Christian who cannot say, with David, “This is my comfort in mine affliction ; thy word hath quickened me ?” Thirdly, in animating them in all the duties of religion. How often have they found “the joy of the Lord,” which they have derived from them, their “strength;” freeing them from fear, depression, and formality ; and enlarging their heart to run in the way of his commandments ! Fourthly, in promoting their mortification and sanctification. This is their ultimate design : “That by them we may be partakers of the Divine nature, having escaped the pollutions of the world through lust.” For they are not only intended to afford us consolation, but to draw us from earth to heaven, from the creature to God, from the life of sense to the life of faith, and from the life of sin to the life of holiness. And Christians feel this effect from them far more than from the dread of wrath, or the authority of command ; according to the language of the Apostle : “Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”

Are you an heir of promise ? “Oh that I was ! I know that these promises are exceeding great and precious ; but they often make me shudder, lest I should come short of them. Oh that I knew whether I might claim them as my own !” Wait on the Lord, and keep his way. Pray for the testimony of his Spirit, as he imparts it by his work in the heart and by his rule in the word. Observe the characters he

has given of the subjects of his grace. “To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.” “Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. Blessed are the peace-makers: for they shall be called the children of God”—

But if I am an heir, what is my duty with regard to these “exceeding great and precious promises?” It is, to believe them. They are nonentities without faith. It is only by faith they can live and operate in the soul. It is to remember them. You should not have your resources to seek when you want them to use; but be of a ready mind to apply these divine encouragements as your various exigences may require. It is to plead them before God. They are good bills, payable at sight. Present them, and say, Fulfil thy word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope. It is to publish and recommend them. It is a good day with you; and if you hold your peace, some evil will befall you. Go therefore and tell the King’s household. Say to your relations, friends, and neighbours; Oh taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man that trusteth in him. Yea, to all you find, say, with Moses to Hobab; “We are journeying unto the place of which the Lord said, I will give it you; come thou with us, and we will do thee good: for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel.”

## JULY 6.—MORNING.

“What went ye out in the wilderness to see?”

MATT. xi. 7.

THESE are the words of Jesus to the multitude, concerning John, to whose preaching they had repaired. “There were many of you—and persons of all ranks and conditions—and some from a great distance. What did you think of the preacher? What induced you to attend his ministry? Surely you have some reason for it; some design in it—What was it?”

May we not learn from hence that we should always have an end in view in repairing to the ordinances of religion? and be able to answer the question, *Why* we attend the ministrations of the word?

This becomes us even as men. Men ought not to act at random; or like the inferior creatures, who are led by blind impulse or instinct, without reflection or motive. They, as the Scripture says, have no understanding; and must be governed and guided by those above them. But God teaches us more than the beasts of the field, and maketh us wiser than the fowls of the air: there is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding. And wherein is this pre-eminence to appear, but in our acting wisely, and with design?

We rise higher, and say, that without this we cannot please God. There can be nothing religious without design. Intention is essential to moral conduct. And though a good motive cannot sanctify a bad action, a bad motive will always vitiate a good action. The Pharisees fasted, and prayed, and gave alms; but it

was to be seen of men; and thus all was corrupted in its principle.

Without an aim in our attendance, we have nothing to pray for before we go; nothing to make the subject bear upon while we are hearing; nothing by which to examine ourselves when we return. How can we decide whether our meeting together is for the better or the worse? whether we have failed in the opportunity, or succeeded? Success is the accomplishment of an end; and must be judged of by it.

A man that acts without an end, never acts in earnest. It is the end that stimulates zeal; that sweetens labour; that repays every expense. What would induce a patient to the taking of medicine, or the losing of a limb, but the thought of restoring or preserving health and life?

To finish the argument—the concern itself here should be taken into the account. In common and trivial matters, we may act without motive; but in momentous ones, every kind of deliberation is wisdom. And how important is our attendance on the word of life! It regards God. And the soul. And eternity. Its consequences will remain for ever. It must furnish the most awful part of our future account. We forget these exercises; but they are all recorded in the book of God's remembrance. We have soon done with the sermon; but the sermon has not done with us till it has judged us at the last day. What an insult is offered to God to come before him, and, by an appearance of devotion, to call forth his attention, when, in reality, we have nothing to do with him! What a trifling is it with divine things! And what can be so dangerous as this! It impairs

the conscience. It deadens moral sensibility. It renders the means of grace unimpressive, by familiarity. It provokes God to withhold or withdraw the influence that is essential to their success.

But, admitting that we always ought to have an end in view, **WHAT OUGHT THAT END TO BE?**—Not curiosity and amusement. This was the case with Ezekiel's hearers. They went to his preaching as persons go to a concert. He was to them as a pleasant song.

Not criticism and cavilling. Many are wiser than their teachers. They come to judge, not to learn; and make a man an offender for a word. Many came to our Saviour to “catch him in his talk.”

Not any outward advantage. A man, by his attending the Gospel, may secure himself reputation, business, or friendship. This is trading in divine things. And what is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul?

Not the quieting of conscience. Some are at ease in Zion, because they hear the word of truth, though they do it not. But the Apostle tells us, they deceive their own selves: and our Lord calls them fools, because they build upon the sand.

But the end should be—

To obtain the conversion of the soul to God. This is the very design of the ministry itself. And how many have we known, since we attended the word, who have been turned from the error of their ways, into the path of peace! Has faith come to *us* by hearing? Has this efficacy ever been *our* aim—*our* wish—*our* prayer?

It should also be, to gain all needful instruction.

This was the case with many who came to hear John. The people, the publicans, and the soldiers, severally said to him—"And what shall we do?" They did not inquire after the duty of others, but after their own. David went to inquire in God's temple; and said, I will hear what God the Lord will speak. The best disposition we can go in, is when we have no partialities, and can sincerely ask, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?—Not shunning to hear all the counsel of God; or counting the preacher our enemy, because he tells us the truth.

It should be, to have divine things re-applied and re-impressed. If we do not want new information, it is desirable to be reminded of forgotten truth, and to have our knowledge reduced to experience and practice. The principle of divine grace cannot be lost. But what changes do believers feel in their frames! how often do their souls cleave unto the dust! And here they obtain quickening, according to his word. And by waiting upon Him their strength is renewed.

It should be also to aid in upholding the public means of grace for the advantage of others. How adapted to usefulness is the institution of preaching! We may judge what a neighbourhood would be without the ministry of the word, when we see what it is even with it. Here are always to be heard calls to repentance, and proclamations of pardon. Here are always furnished solace to the afflicted, and excitement to the careless.

It is lamentable that so little of this spirit is to be found in the midst of so much hearing as there is in our day. We read of a concourse of people in the Acts, occasioned by the clamour of Demetrius, of

whom it is said, “Some cried one thing, and some another; for the assembly was confused; and the more part knew not wherefore they were come together.” With the exception of the crying out, this is a fair representation of many a religious audience. A few are informed and principled; but the mass have no aim, or an improper one.

In another view, it is pleasing to see a place filled with hearers. They are in the way; and God may meet with them. His grace is sovereign and free. Some, who came with no serious design, have been convinced of all, and judged of all; and confessed that God was in the midst of them of a truth. Yet his sovereignty is not our rule, but our resource. What he may do, is one thing; what he will do, is another. He has said, “Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you.” And though he is sometimes found of them that seek him not, he is always found of them that seek him.

## JULY 6.—EVENING.

“Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian: and he led the flock to the back-side of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb. And the Angel of the Lord appeared unto him.” EXOD. iii. 1, 2.

IN the history of Moses we find three distinct periods. Each of them consisted of forty years. The first he passed at the court of Pharaoh. The second as a shepherd in Midian. The third as the leader and ruler of Israel in the wilderness—So changeable often is human life—So little do we know at the commencement of our course what directions it will take, or what designs the Lord has to accomplish, either for us or by us. He giveth none

account of any of his matters: but he says, “I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known: I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them.”

Who can conjecture, when a child is born, how ever disadvantageous the circumstances in which he is placed, what are the destinations of Providence that await him? What a character was here! What wonders did he perform! What a space does he fill in the records of antiquity, as a deliverer, a commander, a lawgiver, an historian, and a prophet of the Lord! What a tax of admiration and gratitude has he levied upon all ages! Yet all this importance was once hid for three months in successive concealments, launched in an ark of bulrushes on the Nile, and, by a concurrence of circumstances, apparently the most casual, discovered, saved, and advanced to glory, honour, and immortality!

God works like himself. He does indeed employ means: but while men depend upon their instruments, his instruments depend upon him; and he so uses them as to shew that the excellency of the power is not of them, but from himself. When, without hire or reward, a whole nation was to be released from the iron grasp of the most powerful tyrant of the day, who appeared before him with this sublime demand,—“Let my people go, that they may serve me?” Not a trained soldier, not an experienced and renowned officer; but a shepherd, with no sword by his side, but only a crook in his hand, and no less than eighty years old, when, according to the language of his own beautiful psalm, our “strength is labour and sorrow.”

The place where he received his surprising commission was the neighbourhood of Horeb, a place rendered afterwards so famous and memorable. What a contrast between his condition at the foot of the same mountain *then*, and his state *now!* Now a solitary keeper of a few sheep; *then* king in Jeshurun, ascending up to meet the Most High face to face; receiving the mandates of infinite purity and rectitude written with the finger of God; and subsisting forty days and forty nights by the Divine power! This must have been a most interesting spot to Moses!

It is worthy of observation, that God in his manifestation found him usefully employed. The occupation indeed was lowly; but though a very learned man, and delicately brought up in a palace, he did not deem the keeping of sheep beneath him, when called to it by the providence of God. Humility is a lovely and blessed endowment. It enables a man to accommodate himself to events, and teaches him how to be abased, as well as how to abound; it leads him to exercise the graces, and perform the duties of his present condition. For many who know what it *is* to be abased, do not know *how* to be abased. Their minds do not come down and harmonize with their circumstances. They are humbled, but not humble; they would rather break than bend. Yet is there any thing dishonourable in any kind of honest labour? How much more respectable is a profession, or a calling, however common, than what Bishop Sanderson said were the plague and disgrace of the country in his day, (what would he have said had he lived in ours?) beggary and shabby gentility! Hands were given us not to be folded, but used. Adam was

placed in Eden to dress and to keep the garden. Seneca says, "I would much rather be sick than idle." As the employment of Moses was not degrading, neither, we are persuaded, was it found uncomfortable. Lord Kaines says, "There is no drudgery upon earth but admits of more enjoyment than the ennui resulting from indolence and inaction." We have much reason to believe that Moses felt these to be the most privileged years of his life. How much more free and happy was the shepherd of Midian than the courtier in Egypt, and the leader and commander in the wilderness! Here by the side of his innocent charge he held communion with his God, was inspired to write the book of Genesis, and to tell how "the earth sprang out of chaos"—And here, some have concluded, he composed the delightful drama of the book of Job, to encourage and comfort his suffering brethren in Egypt. However this may be, the subject adds another instance to the numerous cases mentioned in the Scriptures, in which, when the Lord appeared to communicate a discovery, or confer a distinction, the recipients were engaged in discharging the duties of their stations in life—Indeed where can we find an exception from the rule? Satan loves to meet men idle. God delights to honour diligence and fidelity. He is with us while we are with him. "To him that hath shall be given, and he shall have more abundantly; but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that he hath."

## JULY 7.—MORNING.

"O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" ROM. vii. 24.

IT is commonly supposed that here is a reference to a cruel usage sometimes practised by the tyrants of antiquity; and which is mentioned by Virgil, and Cicero, and Valerius Maximus. It consisted in fastening a dead carcass to a living man. Now suppose a dead body bound to your body—its hands to your hands—its face to your face—its lips to your lips. Here is not only a burden, but an offence. You cannot separate yourself from your hated companion: it lies down—and rises up—and walks—with you. You cannot breathe without inhaling a kind of pestilence—and "Oh!" you would say, "Oh how slowly the parts corrupt and fall off!—Oh how can I longer endure it? When shall I be free? O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" This is very strong. Yet it comes not up to Paul's case. He is speaking of such a wretchedness not without him, but within.

Whatever we may think of this allusion, here is a representation of the sin that dwelleth in us: it is the body of this death, or, as it is in the margin, this body of death. It is called—a body, to intimate the entireness and universality of the evil. Thus we call a code of laws a body of laws; and a system of divinity, a body of divinity. And it is a body of death, to mark its malignant effect. Gunpowder is a body of destruction; arsenic is a body of poison—sin is a body of death. It brought death into the world. It has slain all the inhabitants of the earth,

and will soon slay us. It has brought upon us spiritual, as well as corporeal, death. And it produces a deadness even in the souls of believers, and hinders the operation of those vital principles which they have received from above. By this baneful influence, the tendencies of the divine life in them, which are so glorious, are chilled and checked: and, therefore, they are frequently wandering in meditation; and stupid in reading and hearing; and insensible in prayer; and dull even in praise—Till, roused by reflection, they cry, *My soul cleaveth to the dust; quicken thou me according to thy word.*

For there are remains of this evil even in the subjects of divine grace. None of them are free. In many things, says James, we offend all. In all our doings, says the Church, our sins do appear. My tears, says Beveridge, require to be washed in the blood of Christ; and my repentance needs to be repented of. Those who could die for the Saviour have used the most humbling language with regard to themselves. Sometimes, says Bradford, O my God, there seems to be no difference between me and the wicked: my understanding seems as dark as theirs, and my will as perverse as theirs, and my heart as hard as theirs. Yea, says Paul, at the end of so many years of advancement, I have not attained, I am not already perfect. After this, “Who can say, *I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?*”

But observe the distress this remaining corruption occasions them. It is their chief burden and grief—O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of death? Paul never said any thing like this of any of his sufferings. Yet he was a great sufferer: he suffered the loss of all things; he was

once stoned; thrice he suffered shipwreck; he was twice beaten with rods; five times he received forty stripes, save one; he was in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft—yet so far from groaning and complaining, he tells us he took pleasure in all this, because it was for Christ's sake. And it is a sad evidence against us, if we are more affected with our calamities than with our corruptions. We are not required to be Stoics: we may feel our sufferings. But there is something we shall feel more if we are in a right state of mind, namely, an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.

The people of the world judge of Christians by their own views and feelings; and because *they* love sin, and would deem the liberty to indulge in it a privilege, they think Christians are disposed to take every advantage for the same purpose. But how shall they who are dead to sin live any longer therein? Sin is their abhorrence; and, at the foot of the Cross, they have sworn to have indignation against it for ever. They have a new nature; and, as *far* as they are sanctified, there is as perfect a contrariety between them and sin as between darkness and light. Hence the contest within. The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these being contrary the one to the other, they cannot do the things that they would. And will not this be painful? If a mechanic longed to excel in his workmanship, and an enemy stood by and marred every thing before he put it out of his hand, would not this be vexatious? Would not a man in a journey of importance, and anxious above all things to speed his way, feel a hinderance that would impede him for an hour more than an idler would the loss of a day? He

that delights in neatness will suffer more from a single stain than another would from wearing a filthy garment. Because their sentiments are evangelical, their enemies seem to think their feelings must be Antinomian: but, though this may be not made plain to others, their doctrinal views befriend holiness; and with their mind they serve the law of God: yea, they delight in the law of God after the inward man. The goodness of God leadeth them to repentance. His love is shed abroad in their hearts, and they love him in return. They grieve to think they serve him so defectively, and have still in them so much of that which he infinitely hates. How painful to think, that while they repose upon his bosom they should often pierce it too!

In a word, while many would represent the Christian, if not an enemy to holiness and good works, yet too indifferent to their claims, he is abasing himself before God for the hidden evils of his heart; and is more affected with his sins of infirmity than his revilers are with sins of profligacy and presumption. Thus you may drive a sword through the body of a dead man, and no muscle moves: while the puncture of a thorn will pain a living one all over.

## JULY 7.—EVENING.

"And the Angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, beheld the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed."

Exod. iii. 2.

THIS exhibition was not only miraculous, but very significant. It was intended to strike the mind through the senses, and as an emblem to be instruc-

tive. This appears in at least four circumstances. Observe the *substance* of the figure. Not a fine tall tree, not a cedar or cypress, but "a bush," a mere bush—perhaps a bramble-bush. Such is the image of the Church. If numbers, and riches, and splendour, and power, be the marks of the true Church, as Popery has often professed, where in many ages of the world could it be found? Seldom under the Old Testament dispensation; never under the New. At one time it was in the ark, and there was a wicked Ham. At another in the family of Abraham, and there was a mocking Ishmael. It was now in Egypt, consisting of slaves and brickmakers. If we go forward, our Saviour had not where to lay his head. His followers were the common people. His Apostles were fishermen. They could say, years after they had been endued with power from on high, "Even to this very hour, we hunger, and thirst, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place; we are accounted the filth and offscouring of all things." Paul could make this appeal to the Corinthians: "God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence." And when James addressed the admirers of the golden ring and the goodly apparel, he shews them that if they would follow God, *he* would lead them in another direction: "Hearken, my beloved brethren; hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath pro-

mised to them that love him?" The Church is indeed glorious, but she is all glorious within. Her excellences, like the weapons of her warfare, are not carnal, but spiritual. Natural men therefore do not discern her worth and dignity—"The world knoweth us not."

Observe the *condition* of the bush. It "burned with fire." Fire is one of the most common things in the Scripture to denote severe suffering. Hence it is said, "Glorify ye the Lord in the fires." "I will bring the third part through the fire." What was the state of the Jews now in Egypt? They were enduring every kind and degree of degradation and anguish, and their lives were bitter by cruel bondage. "The Lord said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows." Yet what were their sufferings compared with those of many of their brethren in later ages? It is to the Jews the Apostle refers when he says; "Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: and others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth." And when addressing the Hebrews who were converted and christianized, the same writer says; "Call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions." We also should

do well to reflect on the condition of our ancestors, and be grateful for the exemptions with which we are favoured. Yet there is a sense in which if any man will live godly in Christ Jesus he shall suffer persecution. With us indeed the hand is tied; but the tongue can no man tame, and the carnal mind is enmity against God. And no toleration-act can prevent our having tribulation in the world; or preclude personal and relative afflictions: and these may subserve the purposes of persecution properly so called. We have known individuals who have suffered in private life more than many martyrs; some of them enduring the pressure of grief week after week, and month after month, without notice; and others unable to divulge the source of their distress—a heart's bitterness known only to themselves. Christians are never to consider “fiery trials” as strange things. Of how many can God say, “I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction!”

Mark its *preservation*. Though burning, “the bush was not consumed.” What a commentary on this part of the subject are the words of the Apostle: “We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus’ sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.” And what an exemplification of this language is the history of the Church! Though always exposed and assailed, it has continued to this day. Other cities have perished, and their memorials with them. Empires have dis-

appeared. The four universal monarchies have mouldered away, and their dust has been scattered to the four winds. But the Church is not only in being, but flourishing, and advancing, and going to fill the whole earth. The oppositions it has met with have been overruled for good, and have turned out rather to the furtherance of the Gospel. As it was with the natural Israel, so it has been with the spiritual: the more oppressed, the more they multiplied and grew; and the blood of the martyrs was the seed of the Church. Our hearts should never tremble for the ark of God. It is in safe keeping. He whose cause it is, is the Almighty; and he loves it infinitely better than we do. We never sympathize with the cry, "The Church is in danger." We know it is not in danger—It cannot be in danger while his word is true; "On this rock will I build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." And this is as true of every individual believer as of the whole Church collectively. Not one child from the family, not one sheep, not one lamb from the fold, ever has been or ever shall be lost. "They shall never perish." Though the righteous fall, they shall not be utterly cast down. They may be chastened of the Lord, but they cannot be condemned with the wicked—There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us."

Mark the cause of its security. Fire devours, and the bush was combustible. Why then was it not burnt? The "angel of the Lord appeared unto him

in a flame of fire, out of the midst of a bush;" or, as it is subsequently expressed, "The LORD saw that Moses turned aside to see, and God called unto him out of the midst of the bush." While this leaves no doubt as to the divinity of the Being who displayed himself, so it explains the mystery of the continuance of the bush, and of the perpetuation of the Church typified by it—"God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved; God shall help her, and that right early." "Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion, for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee." God's presence with his people is a delightful reflection; and it is founded in the most perfect certainty. He is with them always, with them in their lowest estate; with them in all their dangers and afflictions; with them to pity them, to assist them, to support them, to preserve them, to deliver them. "For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour: I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee." To change the metaphor of our text, but keep the meaning; when the storm arose in the lake of Galilee, the disciples were thrown into a needless alarm—"Carest thou not," said they, "that we perish?" Perish! How could they perish? Was not he on board? And if so, his safety ensured theirs. *He* could not sink, and therefore *they* could not. And see how they derived from his presence not only security, but immediate and full deliverance—"He arose and rebuked the wind; and there was a great calm."

We cannot conclude without adverting to the notice Moses takes of this event in the dying benediction which he pronounced on the tribes of Israel. When he came to Joseph, he said, "Blessed of the

Lord be his land, for the precious things of heaven, for the dew, and for the deep that coucheth beneath, and for the precious fruits brought forth by the sun, and for the precious things put forth by the moon, and for the precious things of the earth, and the fulness thereof, and FOR THE GOOD WILL OF HIM THAT DWELT IN THE BUSH." The scene, though it had passed forty years before, vividly rushed upon his imagination, and he derives from it the greatest good he could implore, whether for a nation or a man only. What pains we take, and what sacrifices we make, to gain "the good will" of a fellow creature, which, if attained, can do nothing for us in our greatest exigences and interests! But "the good will" of Him that dwelt in the bush—a tried God, a covenant God, a God who there said, "I am the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob"—this can sweeten every comfort—soften every sorrow—and take the sting out of death itself. This can accomplish every hope. This can satisfy every desire. "Think upon me, O my God, for good."

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## JULY 8.—MORNING.

"But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified."  
1 Cor. vi. 11.

We consider the word "washed" as a general term, comprehending a twofold cleansing; a cleansing from the guilt, and a cleansing from the pollution, of sin. It would be easy to shew that in the Scripture it is used in both these senses. The two added articles, therefore, are explanatory of its meaning here—Ye are washed, that is, ye are sanctified and justified.

What we wish to observe is—that both these are found in the same subjects. Justification and sanctification should be always discriminated; but they must never be disunited. Where they are not distinguished, a religious system cannot be clear; and where they are divided, it can never be safe. Where they are not distinguished, Law and Gospel, free will and free grace, the merit of man and the righteousness of Christ, run into a mass of confusion and disorder. And where they are divided, Pharisaic pride, or Antinomian presumption, will be sure to follow.

Be it remembered, then—That the one regards something done for us; the other, something done in us. The one is a relative, the other a personal, change. The one a change in our state, the other in our nature. The one is perfect at once, the other is gradual. The one is derived from the obedience of the Saviour, the other from his Spirit. The one gives us a title to heaven, the other a meetness for it.

But let us not forget their union. It is supposed that this was typified in the dying of the Lord Jesus, when from his pierced side there came forth blood and water; the one to atone, the other to purify. But not to lay too much stress on an historical incident, and which can be physically accounted for, the truth to which we allude is most expressly asserted in the word of God. “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” “There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” We need one, as well as the other. And if we were not sanctified, as well as justified, we could neither serve God properly, nor enjoy him. Suppose an

unrenewed man pardoned : he would be no more able to see the kingdom of God than before ; but would feel the company, the pleasures, and employments, of the state uncongenial and irksome. Or suppose you had a son ; and you forbade him to enter a place of contagion, on pain of losing all you could leave him—He goes, and is seized with the infection. He thus is not only guilty, by transgressing your command—but he is also diseased. And do you not perceive, that your *forgiving* him does not *heal* him ? He wants not only the father's pardon, but the physician's aid ; and in vain he is freed from the forfeiture of his estate, if he be left under the power of his disorder.

Let us, therefore, judge of the one by the other ; and make our election, by making our calling sure. To be justified freely from all things ; to have passed from death unto life ; and never to come into condemnation again, is a privilege of infinite value : and there is a possibility of knowing that it belongs to us. But how is it to be known ? Not by an audible voice from heaven, as the woman heard—"Thy sins are forgiven thee." Not by a sudden impulse, or working the mind into a persuasion which we are unable to justify. For the very thing to be determined is, whether this confidence be a good hope through grace, or a mere presumption. If the confidence itself were sufficient, the Antinomian would be surer than the Christian ; but he has a lie in his right hand. The sacred writers do not consider this certainty of mind as self-proved ; nor regard all apprehensions as to our state—unbelief. They tell us to "fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of us should seem to come short of

it." They call upon us to "examine ourselves, whether we be in the faith :" and to "prove our own selves." "We know," says John, "that we have passed from death unto life—because we love the brethren." "Hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us." This is the way, walk ye in it—What is the spirit which he hath given you ? Does it convince of sin ? Does it cause you to hunger and thirst after righteousness ? Does it glorify Christ ?

It is true that our souls are justified by faith ; but faith is justified by works. Has this promise been fulfilled in us—"Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean : from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them ?" As far as we are strangers to this practice, and to these dispositions, whatever our knowledge, or our assurance, may be, we ought to tremble. For though the grace of God finds us sinners, it does not leave us such. While it "bringeth salvation," it teaches us "that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world ; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

## JULY 8.—EVENING.

"I will gather them that are sorrowful for the solemn assembly."

ZEPH. iii. 18.

THIS "solemn assembly" was the convocation of the people for worship, especially in the feast of unleavened bread, the feast of weeks, and the feast of tabernacles. In these, thrice a year, all the males were to appear before God in the place which he should choose. This was Jerusalem. It was therefore named "the city of their solemnities." Here, at such seasons, they were always to "rejoice before the Lord." The services indeed were all of the festive kind; and "joy becomes a feast"—

"But we have no such lengths to go,  
Nor wander far abroad;  
Where'er the saints assemble now,  
There is a house for God."

Yet we have our solemn assemblies as well as they; and surely we have not less reason than they had to be joyful, and to say, "Let us serve the Lord with gladness, and come before his presence with singing." Yea, if we are habitually strangers to pleasure in religious services; if we cannot call the Sabbath a delight; if we are not glad when they say to us, "Let us go into the house of the Lord;" if we do not rejoice at his word as one that findeth great spoil; if spiritual duties are not in some good degree spiritual privileges; there is surely enough to awaken apprehension of our state before God.

We never apply the term "solemn" to any common or merely secular assembly; but only to one that has something in it sacred, and capable of inspiring awe.

And what can be more venerable, grand, and impressive, than the assembling together of a number of immortal beings, in the presence of the Lord of angels, to engage not in any of the affairs of this world, but in those which concern the soul and eternity, and the consequences of which will affect us for ever? Well therefore may we exclaim with Jacob; "How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." "God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him." Let us impress ourselves with the thought when we are repairing to the sanctuary. Nothing will tend more to preserve us from a roving eye and a wandering heart; nothing will conduce more to our profiting by the means of grace, than our engaging with a serious and thoughtful frame of mind. David therefore said, "In thy fear will I worship towards thy holy temple." It is the more necessary, because of the frequent return of these solemnities. If familiarity does not always breed contempt, it must always tend to reduce veneration.

But what caused these pious Jews to be "sorrowful?" See how they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh, but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. Their metropolis was destroyed, their palaces were demolished, strangers possessed their fields and vineyards; but though their calamities were great and numberless, nothing distressed them in comparison with the destruction of the temple, and the loss of their sacred institutions. They were "sorrowful because of the solemn assembly." This was now broken up and dispersed. "Ah!" said their aching hearts, "thine enemies roar in the midst of thy congregations. We see not our signs: there is no more

any prophet: neither is there among us any that knoweth how long." "Our holy and beautiful house, where our fathers worshipped, is burned with fire, and all our pleasant things are laid waste."

Blessed be God, *we* cannot be thus sorrowful for the solemn assembly. Our temples are standing, our Sabbaths are continued, our eyes see our teachers, our ears hear the joyful sound; we sit under our own vine and fig tree, and none makes us afraid. Yet we ought, and, if we are spiritually minded, we shall on many accounts be sorrowful for the solemn assembly. Sorrowful when deprived of opportunities of being found in it. This may be the case owing to the calls of urgent business, or accident, or sickness, or relative affliction. When indeed we are thus providentially detained, the Lord will not leave us comfortless: yet when we remember these things, we shall pour out our souls in us; for we had gone with the multitude, we went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holy day. Sorrowful that it is so little attended. Many so undervalue the privilege as to suffer the most trifling expense or impediment to keep them from the courts of the Lord. Sorrowful that it is so little improved. How many attend frequently and regularly who receive the grace of God in vain, and are no wiser and better for all their advantages! Sorrowful that it is so impoverished and declining—That there is less spirituality and fervour; that we do not see the children instead of the fathers; that while the old are removed, so few in early life are coming forward to fill their places; that so few are led to inquire, What must I do to be saved? that so few increase with all the increase of God. Sorrowful that it is dishonoured and degraded

—By apostacies, backslidings, inconsistencies, and falls, in the members of it; so that the enemies of the Lord blaspheme, and the way of truth is evil spoken of, and the Redeemer wounded in the house of his friends. Hence it is here added, “to whom the reproach of it is a burden.” All this “is a lamentation, and shall be for a lamentation.”

Yet if we feel the distress, it is a token for good. It is godly sorrow. And blessed are they that thus sorrow—For, says God, “I will gather them that are sorrowful for the solemn assembly.” This means, with regard to these Israelites, that they should be united again from their dispersion, and led back to enjoy their former privileges, and again see his power and glory as they had seen him in the sanctuary. With regard to other sorrowers, the Lord will gather them in two ways; gather them for safety, and gather them for glory.

Moses said to Pharaoh, upon his announcing the plague of hail, “Send now and gather thy cattle, and all that is in the field;” that is, house them from the storm. Thus the hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and affords them a safe and comfortable retreat from the weather and the birds of prey. Our Lord uses this image; and David had also said, “He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.” “He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust; his truth shall be thy shield and buckler.” What an encouragement is this in times of public and general calamity! Indeed without it we should not be able to live a day in quiet from the fear of evil. The husbandman, when the grain is ripe, gathers the wheat into the barn. The bride-

groom is said to go "down into the garden to gather lilies." It is thus the Lord, when they are made meet, removes his saints from the Church below to the Church above, and from earth to heaven, by the hand of death. Thus they are continually gathering one by one to their own people. At length he will send forth his angels, and will gather together his elect from the four winds: and the aggregate will be perfect. To this the Apostle refers, when he says, "Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him."

Two things result from hence. First—that sensibility attends genuine religion. The Lord takes away the heart of stone out of our flesh, and gives us a heart of flesh. Secondly—Nothing is more pleasing to God than a feeling, lively, public spirit, that will not allow of our looking on our own things, but also on the things of others, and especially the things that are Jesus Christ's. If we have no concern for the welfare of Zion, we are not living members of the mystical body. If one member suffers, all the members suffer with it. "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem. They shall prosper that love thee."

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#### JULY 9.—MORNING.

"And it came to pass, that as he was praying in a certain place when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples." LUKE xi. 1.

THOUGH "one" of the disciples only said this, we have no reason to think the rest differed from him in sentiment. He was the mouth for them all. When our Lord said to the twelve, Will ye also go away?

Peter answered—but it was in the name of his brethren; and expressed the conviction of each of them—“Lord, to whom shall *we* go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.” It is very probable he was the speaker here: for his heart was always very near his lips. But, whoever the speaker was, every thing here was praiseworthy.

I admire his decorum. Some are satisfied with the moralities of conduct: but there are the proprieties too; and these are not to be overlooked. “Let every thing be done,” says the Scripture, “decently, and in order.” This should be peculiarly the case in our holy assemblies. Let us guard against every thing that is unseemly and disturbing. Let us avoid coughing as much as we can. Let us not look and stare all over the house of God. Let us not talk or whisper. Let us beware of coming in during the service. How painful and injurious is it to the preacher and worshipper to be interrupted and diverted in those sacred moments in which we ought to attend on the Lord without distraction! Observe these disciples. They surrounded our Saviour while he was engaged—but with breathless silence, and did not break in upon his devotion, but waited—till he had “ceased praying.”

I admire his emulation. Having heard his Master, he began to say, Well, this *is* prayer. What dignity! what wisdom! what reverence! what submission! what fervour, are here! According to this, we have never prayed yet. Lord, teach us to pray. Indeed, the more we attend on him in any thing, the less shall we think of ourselves. The beams of this Sun will soon darken our tapers.

I admire his wish to resemble what he so much admired. We should always endeavour to improve

by the superior endowments and excellences of others. They should not excite envy, or yield discouragement; but excite to imitation. What others are, they are by grace: and when we see how any of our fellow-Christians bear prosperity; or endure affliction; or fill up their stations; we should be anxious to follow them, even as they follow Christ.

I admire his spiritual wisdom. Some wish to resemble others in worldly possessions; or bodily qualities; or mental endowments and acquisitions. But it is better to resemble them in grace than in any of these. Many would rule, or compose, or speak, like others; but the thing is, *to pray like them*. It is by prayer we hold communion with God. It is by this we unlock all his treasures. He that knows how to pray, has the secret of safety in prosperity, and of support in trouble. He has the art of overruling every enemy, and of turning every loss into a gain. He has the power of soothing every care; of subduing every passion; of adding a relish to every enjoyment—the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver; and the gain thereof, than much fine gold. Many things are good for me; but none so good as to draw nigh to God.

I admire his humility. He is convinced that they are not sufficient of themselves for the duty, but need Divine aid. We want instruction in every thing. The way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps: but we peculiarly need guidance here. The Spirit helpeth *our infirmities*, says the Apostle; for *we* know not what to pray for as we ought. The best of men have erred in their prayers. Take my life from me, says Elijah, in the very midst of his usefulness. I beseech Thee, says

Moses, shew me thy glory. You ask for death, says God; for no man can see me, and live. "James and John, the sons of Zebedee, come unto him, saying, Master, we would that thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we shall desire. And he said unto them, What would ye that I should do for you? They said unto him, Grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory. But Jesus said unto them, Ye know not what ye ask: can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" What would children be—how miserable—how useless—what burdens to themselves—and what plagues to others, if they had whatsoever they desired! As to temporal blessings, it is hard to distinguish between our real and our imaginary wants; and between what is pleasing, and what is profitable. And, even as to spiritual things, we never see their beauty and glory, so as to desire them supremely, till the Lord teaches us to profit. Nor do we know of ourselves how to come before the Lord, and deal concerning them. Under a sense of guilt, and a concern to obtain acceptance, what strange expedients do we often adopt, and what a self-righteous traffic do we carry on, before we come with the blood of sprinkling, and make mention of his righteousness only! We may also err as to our end and aim. We often ask, and receive not, because we ask amiss, that we may consume it upon our lusts.

—"An easy thing to pray!" Who that has made the trial, and is concerned for the result of it, but exclaims, with Elihu, "Teach us what we shall say unto Him; for we cannot order our speech by reason of darkness?" or, with the disciples, "Lord, teach us to pray?"

JULY 9.—EVENING.

"Are the consolations of God small with thee?"

Job xv. 11,

THEY are not so in themselves; nor have they been so in the experience of many. Many have found them sufficient to wean their affections from the vanities and dissipations of the world, to set their hearts at rest, and to sustain them under every loss. When they have walked in the midst of trouble, these have been able to revive them; and in the multitude of their thoughts within them *his* comforts have delighted their souls. Nor can they be small in the estimation of any who have tasted that the Lord is gracious. But some know their fuller value from the want, rather than from the possession. They have had indeed relishes of them; but as to habitual enjoyment, the consolations of God *are* small with *them*.

But is there not a cause? And should not serious inquiry be made after it? The cause cannot be found in the God of all comfort. We are not straitened in him. All the fulness of God is before us. "Have I been a wilderness to Israel? a land of darkness?" Sometimes the reason is, the indulgence of something incompatible with the will of God. This injures our peace and joy, as the worm affected Jonah's gourd: the cause was not visible, but it was real, and while the refreshful shade was withering over his head, mischief was working at the root. The boughs and leaves were some way off from the injury; but they felt the influence in every pore, and for want of vital communication could no longer resist the scorching

sun. If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me. There was an Achan in the camp that troubled Israel; therefore they could not stand before their enemies. Our obedience will be imperfect as long as we remain here, but it must be impartial. We shall rue for any reserve we make: and can only be preserved from shame if we have respect unto all his commandments. When Joab was assaulting Abel, he said to the wise woman, I do not wish to destroy this mother city in Israel; but a man, Sheba by name, hath lifted up his hand against the king—Throw his head over the wall, and the siege shall be instantly raised: and so it was. Let us therefore search, and try our ways, and resolve to act faithfully by the discovery.

“The dearest idol I have known,  
Whate'er that idol be,  
Help me to tear it from thy throne,  
And worship only thee.

“So shall my walk be close with God,  
Calm and serene my frame;  
So purer light shall mark the road,  
That leads me to the Lamb.”

And be it remembered, that the evil we are speaking of may regard not only some sin committed, but some duty neglected. One complainer perhaps holds back that which restitution requires. Another perhaps forgives not his brother his trespasses. A third does not reprove his neighbour, though he sees sin upon him.

Neglect in attending divine ordinances will furnish a reason. When by the providence of God we are deprived of these, or of the ability to repair to them, we shall find that there is not an essential connexion

between grace and what we call the means of grace. He will be with us in this trouble, and we shall see his power and glory, so as we have seen him in the sanctuary. But it is otherwise when having the opportunity in our hands we are found absent. We then transgress the command which forbids us to forsake the assembling of ourselves together; we put a slight upon the Lord's own appointment; and shew a disregard to his presence and blessing. The hand of the diligent maketh rich: and they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. How much did Thomas lose in being absent from the Apostles when the risen Saviour appeared in the midst of them! How often have we heard persons remark, that when they have been absent from their places, the text or the sermon has touched the very subject they wished to hear; and it is not improbable that something was then lost which might have confirmed or comforted them through life!

Ignorance of their privileges has also its influence. Many labour under great difficulties for want of evangelical instruction; and some who have many advantages are yet very obscure and perplexed in their views of the grounds of their acceptance before God, and of the certainty of their persevering in the Divine life; and also of the nature and design of afflictive dispensations. Persons may be safe, and feel little of the glorious liberty of the sons of God; for this depends on knowledge: "ye shall *know* the truth, and the truth shall make you free." "Blessed are the people who *know* the joyful sound; they shall walk, O Lord, in the Light of thy countenance, in thy Name shall they rejoice all the day, and in thy righteousness they shall be exalted."

To this we may add, separation from godly intercourse. Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart, so doth a man his friend by hearty counsel. Paul was sad; but when he saw the brethren, he thanked God and took courage. "Jonathan, Saul's son, arose, and went to David into the wood, and strengthened his hand in God." Thus two are better than one. A Christian will often be tempted to imagine something singular in his views and feelings, especially those of a sorrowful kind; but a fellow-believer will be able, by opening his experience, to turn the stumbling-block into a way-mark, and convince him that all the subjects of Divine grace have passed through the same exercises. Having seen the treachery of his own heart a Christian is afraid of any encouragement offered from that quarter, till he has consulted with a wiser than himself in the things of God. His own prayers seem not to deserve the name of grace or of supplication; but he is cheered by learning that he has an interest in the petitions of those who have power with God, and can prevail.

But finally, what says James? "Ye have not, because ye ask not; ye ask and have not, because ye ask amiss." And what said the Saviour to his disciples? "Hitherto ye have asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive; that your joy may be full." Therefore open your mouth wide. Therefore pray not according to the sense you have of your unworthiness—this would strike you dumb—but according to the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness towards you by Christ Jesus. Think of the unspeakable gift; and having boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him, say, "He that spareth not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us *all things?*"

## JULY 10.—MORNING.

"Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift." 2 COR. ix. 15.

WE have always been accustomed to think of Christ when these words are pronounced: and we are not disposed to give up this application without necessity. And we see no such necessity if we appeal to authority: for, not to mention many of the ancients, this application is supported by many of the moderns also; by a Henry, a Scott, a Doddridge. And we see no such necessity if we refer to the writer of the words. Paul's mind was full of Christ; the love of Christ constrained him; and nothing is more common in his Epistles than sudden and unlooked-for allusions to him. To which we may add, the nature of the case itself; for if the words would apply to the charity of the Corinthians, how much stronger will they apply to the Saviour of sinners! And though we would do justice to every part of the Scripture, we would yet rather be followers of Cocceius than Crellius, of whom, as expositors of the Bible, it was said, the one found Christ everywhere, the other nowhere.

God then—this is the meaning—so loved the world, that he *gave* his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life. Yea, he is not only a gift, but an **UNSPEAKABLE** gift. Much has indeed been said of this gift; in Christian conversation; in the sermons of ministers; in the preaching of the Prophets and Apostles; in the Scriptures of truth, of which it is the principal, and in a sense, the only subject. But it is not in the power of words to do it justice. And we see how even inspired men labour for terms and images, when they would hold forth a little of the Saviour's glory.

He is a gift unspeakable—if we consider the greatness of his person. We consider him a man of sorrows: but he was not always so. He was born in the fulness of time: but his goings forth were from of old, from everlasting. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.

Unspeakable—if we consider the immensity of the plenitude which he possesses, as Mediator for our use. Some things include many more. What an unspeakable blessing is a fountain, being the source of all the refreshing streams that flow from it, and fertilize and beautify the ground! What an unspeakable blessing is the sun, that makes our day, our spring, our summer!—What would the earth be without the sun? What an unspeakable blessing is life, with all its intelligence, pursuits, productions, and enjoyments! *He* is the fountain of living waters. *He* is the Sun of righteousness. *He* is the life of the soul and eternity. He not only insures every thing else, but contains it. In him it hath pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell. In him we are blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places.

—And can we think of this, and not exclaim—*Thanks* be unto God for his unspeakable gift? Nothing is so detestable as ingratitude. The very heathens condemned it. One of their philosophers said, Call a man ungrateful, and you call him every thing that is vile. The Lacedæmonians made it punishable. South compares such a wretch to the sea, that turns the sweet influences of the clouds into brine; and to the grave, which is always receiving and never restoring. How soon we complain of a

want of thankfulness in our fellow-creatures towards ourselves! How soon do we abandon them, when our favours seem lost upon them!

And yet what are these favours, when too, from a community of nature, and the command of God, we are under an obligation to shew them! How few! How small! How far from being entirely pure in their motive! With how little self-denial and sacrifice attended! Herein is love! not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

And can this love deserve only a careless reflection of the mind? Or a cold acknowledgment of the lip? Ought it not to claim and consecrate the heart? Ought we not to ask, every moment, What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards me? Ought we not, by the mercies of God, to present our bodies a living sacrifice?

“Were the whole realm of Nature mine,  
That were a present far too small:  
Love so amazing, so divine,  
Demands my soul, my life, my all.”

## JULY 10.—EVENING.

“And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.”

HEB. vi. 15.

THE person spoken of is Abraham. The promise is contained in the preceding verses, and was delivered in the form of an oath. “For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he sware by himself, saying, Surely, blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee. And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained

the promise." He had obtained the promise itself long before; but the meaning is, that he at length obtained also the fulfilment.

Now they that are of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham. He was called the friend of God; and they are all precious in his sight, and honourable, and he has loved them. Of each of the sons it will be said in due time as it was of the father of the faithful; "And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise."

The believer's dependence and expectation are placed upon the promise of God. He would have nothing to sustain his hope, but for some Divine intimation and assurance. God therefore from the beginning spoke in a way of promise; and in a way of promise he always deals with his people. He could have done for them all that he purposed to do without announcing it previously, but then they could have derived no advantage from it beforehand; and as they could not have known it, they could not have trusted in it, and acted upon it, and pleaded it in prayer, saying, "Do as thou hast said." A promise is more than a simple declaration; it is an express engagement by which a man lays himself under an obligation, and does not leave himself at liberty to act indifferently. And this, with reverence, applies to the conduct of the Supreme Being. But it is obvious that God's promising must have originated in his own undeserved goodness: for not only are his promises exceeding great and precious, but we were not worthy of the least of all his mercies and of *all the truth* which he has shewed unto his servants. Yea, while we had no claims upon him, he had claims against us; and could righteously have punished us

as transgressors. Let us only imagine that God had not as yet spoken concerning us at all, but was about to do it: conscious of our guilt, we could have expected nothing but a certain fearful looking-for of judgment; and, like Adam and Eve, hearing the voice of God, we should have endeavoured to hide ourselves for fear. But be astonished, O heaven, at this, and wonder, O earth; he is good and ready to forgive! and comes forward and assures us that the thoughts he thinks towards us are thoughts of peace, and not of evil! and that all things are provided and ready for our relief!

As soon as we are born of God we are his children, and if children then heirs. As such we have a title, which no enemy can invalidate, to all the promises. But the promises are not always immediately accomplished—and hence a period of “patient enduring” is necessary. God indeed is not slack concerning his promise: he is never a moment beyond the appointed season. Yet, according to our wishes and apprehensions, he seems to delay: for, ignorant of *his* time, we often fix one ourselves, and thereby not only shew our folly and presumption, but expose ourselves to disappointment. When God had promised Abraham a son, for many years he went childless. And how long did things grow more dark and discouraging before Joseph could see any probability of the fulfilment of his dream! It is often the same now in the history and experience of believers. Their prayers may seem disregarded. Their iniquities may prevail against them, in the sense of their guilt, and in the stirring of their power. The battle may wax hotter and fiercer, and victory apparently decline. The land that is to be given them, mea-

sured by their feelings and fears, seems very far off; and they are frequently ready to say, "Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Doth his promise fail for evermore?"

This season of waiting is very trying, especially when the blessing is earnestly desired, and we are pressed down by outward trials. When it cometh, it is a tree of life; but hope deferred maketh the heart sick. During the suspense the enemy is busy, to produce distrust and despair, and to lead us to say, Why should I wait for the Lord any longer? But, in opposition to this, faith will whisper, "Wait on the Lord;" and, "Be of good courage." It is good for a man not only to hope, but "quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord." It will keep him from entertaining those hard thoughts of God which always furnish bitter reflections after he has appeared to our joy; and also prevents our using unhallowed means to help us out in our eagerness—like Rebekah, who, though she knew the elder was to serve the younger, in her impatience, had resource to injustice and lies to accelerate the event. He that believeth maketh not haste. He remembers how long he kept God waiting for him. He knows that the Lord's time is the best time; that every thing is beautiful in its season; that fruit is most wholesome and rich when it is fully ripe. He is also sure that he cannot wait in vain—for they shall not be ashamed that wait for him.

For

No uncertainty attends the final accomplishment of his word. This Abraham found: "And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise." This the Jews found. At the end of four hundred and thirty years they were to leave the house of bond-

age: "And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the selfsame day it came to pass, that all the hosts of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt." He also engaged to give them Canaan for an inheritance. And therefore, whatever difficulties opposed their passage and their entrance, it was at last acknowledged, "Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people which thou hast redeemed: thou hast guided them in thy strength unto thy holy habitation." "Behold," says Joshua, "this day I am going the way of all the earth: and ye know in all your hearts and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof." Solomon also at the dedication of the temple bore the same testimony to the veracity of God: "Thou speakest with thy mouth, and hast fulfilled it with thine hand, as it is this day."

Let us then be strong in faith, giving glory to God. Let us remember that all his promises are yea and amen in Christ Jesus; and that every thing in his nature and in his character is a pledge for the execution. "The vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry"—And bring with it the triumph and the song; "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints."

## JULY 11.—MORNING.

"And he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the mount of God."

1 KINGS xix. 8.

HAVING, on Mount Carmel, witnessed the triumph of truth over idolatry; and destroyed Baal's prophets; and predicted the return of rain; and urged the king to hasten home, lest he should be impeded by the approaching torrents; "Elijah girded up his loins, and ran before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel." Had Ahab properly regarded Elijah, he would have taken him up into his chariot, as the eunuch did Philip; and have honoured him before his attendants; and conversed with him respecting the awful state of the country. But he did not cordially like him: and was happy to get rid of him as soon as possible; as Felix said unto Paul, "Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season I will call for thee."

But we admire the conduct of Elijah. He was not elated by the recent unparalleled honours conferred upon him above the duty of a subject; and, therefore, notwithstanding the character of Ahab, he pays respect to him as a sovereign; and renders honour to whom honour was officially due.

It is probable that Elijah came to Jezreel to carry on the reformation he had begun; and hoping that the late miracle would give him a powerful influence. But soon after he arrives in the suburbs, he learns the determination, not of the queen consort, but of the queen *regent* (for Ahab, though king, was completely governed by a termagant wife), to put him to death.

"And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and withal how he had slain all the prophets with the sword. Then Jezebel sent a messenger unto Elijah, saying, So let the gods do unto me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by to-morrow about this time." Upon this he should have stood his ground, and have resolved to go on with his work, leaving events with God, and relying upon that providence and grace which had so signally appeared for him. He should have replied, as Chrysostom did, when Eudoxia, the empress, threatened him—"Go, tell her that I fear nothing but sin :" or as Basil did, when Valerius, the Arian emperor, sent him word that he would put him to death—"I would that he would ; I shall only get to heaven the sooner :" or as Luther did, when they would have dissuaded him from going to Worms—"I would go if there were as many devils there as there are tiles upon the houses :" or as the Prince of Condé did to the French king, when he purposed that he should go to mass, or suffer perpetual banishment, or death—"As to the first of these, by the grace of God, I never will ; and as to the other two, I leave the choice of either to your majesty."

But where is the faith that never staggers through unbelief ? The hand that never hangs down ? The knee that never trembles ? We are amazed at the magnanimity of Elijah before, in reproving Ahab to his face, opposing single-handed all the followers of Baal, and slaying Jezebel's four hundred and fifty chaplains ! But what is man ? He cannot stand longer than God holds him, or walk further than God leads him—This same hero now turns pale, and flees for his life ! "And when he saw that, he arose and

went for his life, and came to Beer-sheba, which belongeth to Judah, and left his servant there." And why did he leave him? Was it from tenderness, wishing to save him from the perils to which he himself was exposed? Or was it the more perfectly to conceal his movements, as one could be more easily hid than more? Or did he wish for unrestrained, unwitnessed intercourse with God? There are seasons, and places, in which we wish no eye to see, no ear to hear, but God to be all in all. Abraham left his young men below when he ascended to worship God. And Jesus said to Peter, James, and John, in the garden, Tarry ye here, while I go and pray yonder.

However this was, "he went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree:" and, fatigued with journeying and hunger; and harassed with forebodings; and despairing of further success in his exertions; he asked to resign not only his office, but his life—"He requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers"—That is, I am not fitter to bear their trials, or discharge their duties, than they were. Why then should I remain, when they are removed? I have done and suffered my share. This was the language of nature, not of grace. Children grow fretful as they grow sleepy. Paul longed to depart, to be with Christ, which was far better; yet he was willing to abide in the flesh, because it was needful for others. While we are ready to go, we must also be willing to stay, if God has anything for us to do, or to suffer. To be impatient for retreat, especially as soon as we meet with disappointment, is unmanly and sinful.

Though Elijah was forward to die, it was a peevish haste, and evinced that he was in a very improper frame for the event.—But God remembered that he was dust, compassionated his weakness, and appeared for him, even in a strait of his own producing, and dealt not with him after his desert. “And as he lay and slept under a juniper tree, behold, then an angel touched him, and said unto him, Arise and eat. And he looked, and, behold, there was a cake baken on the coals, and a cruse of water at his head. And he did eat and drink, and laid him down again.” Before, He had fed him by ravens; now he supplies him by one of those heavenly messengers who are all ministering spirits unto the heirs of salvation. The office seems beneath one of these glorious beings. But he was as much pleased to bring a meal to this weary traveller, as he would have been had he received orders to manage the affairs of an empire. Angels have no partialities. They consider not the *nature* of the command, but only the *Author*. May His will be done on earth as it is done in heaven!

But what *was* the meal? A cake of bread and a cruse of water! Nature is content with little; and grace with less. How many disorders arise from excess! A voracious appetite is a judgment. A delicate one is an infirmity. A dainty one is a disgrace. Ministers, above all men, should not be given to appetite, or be fond of dainty meats. And those who entertain them should not insult them by the nature and the degree of their preparations. Did our Saviour require much serving? Did not he reprove Martha, for being cumbered about many things? When an angel was the guest, Abraham brought him forth a cake, baked on the hearth, with butter and

milk. And when an angel, who had the command of every store, catered for the greatest and best man of the age, it was a cake of bread and a cruse of water.

But "the angel of the Lord came again the second time, and touched him, and said, Arise and eat; because the journey is too great for thee." God's caring for his people is not only relieving, but prospective. He foresees what they will need, and prepares them for difficulties and duties which they had not reckoned upon. He strengthens the shoulder when the burden is going to be increased. And when he gives them an additional supply of faith, hope, peace, and joy; little, perhaps, do they imagine what trials they are to endure, or what steps they are to take, in the strength of it!

But how was Elijah fitted for his journey? Surely the sustenance derived from this meal was miraculous. But it shews us what his power can do; and teaches us that man liveth not by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. "And he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the mount of God." And why did he choose to repair hither? Would no other place have afforded him an equally safe retreat? Was he actuated by curiosity? or piety? Here was much to strike his mind, and to aid his faith and devotion. Here, would he say, Israel encamped. Here fell the manna! Here moved, and here stood, the fiery cloudy pillar! On the top of this hill God spake all the words of his Law! And there God spake with Moses, face to face!—How much is connected with some spots! "They are none other but the house of God and the gate of heaven."

JULY 11.—EVENING.

"When thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee."

JOHN i. 43.

BEHOLD here THE RETIRED ISRAELITE—"Thou wast under the fig tree."

It is spoken of Nathanael. Some have contended that he was the same with Bartholomew. Others, with less plausibility, have supposed that he was the bridegroom of the marriage at Cana in Galilee. He is once mentioned, along with some of the disciples, at the sea of Tiberias, in the close of John's Gospel. With this exception, all we know of him is from the chapter before us. Philip had the honour of introducing him to the Son of God: "Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." Nathanael in reply said unto him, "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Philip said unto him, Come and see." His objection shews that his knowledge was small and his prejudices vulgar. But his compliance proved that he was open to conviction, and willing to examine. And this accords with the character given of him by our Lord. "Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!" By calling him an *Israelite* he distinguished him from other nations, and by calling him an *Israelite indeed* he distinguished him from his own nation: for all were not Israel who were of Israel. He was a Jew inwardly, whose circumcision was that of the heart in the spirit. He was not free from infirmity, but devoid of hypocrisy, and

upright before God and man. Conscious that he had never been with Jesus, he asks with surprise, "Whence knowest thou me?" And Jesus answered, "Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree."

The fig tree was the place of his retreat. It was probably in a garden, forming by its foliage a kind of natural alcove. It was chosen by Nathanael, not only because its large leaves would screen him from the rays of the sun, but conceal him from human inspection. For he wished to be alone. We may be alone in company. Who has not endured the solitariness of being with persons of no congeniality with their own views and feelings, who have checked and chilled every favourite sentiment, and rendered every attempt to introduce pious discourse like putting a tender exotic plant out into the frost and snow? But, through desire, a man having separated himself seeketh and intermeddleth with all wisdom. The place is not always optional. The poor are to be pitied who have no conveniency for retirement; and they are still more to be pitied who, by reductions in life, have been deprived of the accommodations they once enjoyed—if they are Christians, there is nothing they will so much feel themselves. But where it is optional, the place is indifferent, any farther than it may usefully or injuriously affect us as to the object of our withdrawal. Many therefore prefer the apartment of a room. But others, instead of being distracted and diverted when abroad, are aided and impressed; their thoughts are quickened, their fancy is enlivened by the displays of wisdom, power, and goodness, all around them; and they can easily rise from things seen and temporal to those which are

unseen and eternal—They love the fig tree; and the wood, the corn-field, the meadow, and the garden, will bear witness to their devotion. Isaac was in the field at evening tide to meditate; and Peter was praying on the house-top.

But what was Nathanael doing under the fig tree? It was something significant, and which was instantly recalled to mind. There are facts in the lives of all which are easily susceptible of remembrance. Some of them may be awful; and only a hint given, or a circumstance mentioned, will call up the colour in the cheek, or excite a pang in the conscience. Such to the seduced must be any reference to the place of allurement and ruin; and to the murderer the place stained with blood. But to pious minds there are spots delightfully and sacredly interesting, because they have been no other than the house of God and the gate of heaven. Such was Beth-el to Jacob, and the hill Mizar to David, and the river of Chebar to Ezekiel, and Patmos to John, and the fig tree to Nathanael. Though we know not in particular what was Nathanael's engagement, it was obviously something of a religious nature. He was probably reading the law and the prophets; or reflecting on some divine subject; or praying to the God of heaven; or, more probably, he was indulging in all these successively, or intermingling them together; for this is the business of retirement.

Nathanael, we may be assured, would not turn his back on the temple of God, or forsake the assembling of himself together with those who keep holy day, as the manner of some is; and public worship has its own undeniable claims. But he found in secluded devotion four advantages and recommendations. The first

regarded frequency. Public services are comparatively few, and they *should* be few; and they require much time; and the seasons must be fixed, and invariable, and known, for general accommodation. But opportunities for private devotion continually occur, and ask only the momentary convenience of the individual himself. The second regarded freedom. All company is a degree of restraint upon intimate associates. Friendship longs always to resign up itself more fully to its own object. It therefore deals much in secrecy: and this is peculiarly the case with the friendship between God and the soul. There are confessions proper only for his presence; petitions to be only poured into his ear; griefs to be lodged only in his bosom. "The heart knoweth his own bitterness; and a stranger intermeddleth not with his joy." The third was self-acquaintance. Self-knowledge is the most important and difficult. Persons may live to be old, and yet be ignorant of themselves; and they may be much alone, and never meet with their own hearts, or morally converse with them. Yet surely retirement affords the best opportunity to try our state, to examine our character, to detect our mistakes, to learn our dangers, and to provide against them. The fourth was the greater evidence of religious principle. Motives of less purity may induce us to repair to places where there is much besides God to attract and to entertain, especially in the goodness of the singing or the eloquence of the preacher. It is no unusual thing in our day for the service of the sanctuary to be turned into an amusement. But it does look like conviction, like a regard for the duty itself, like real love to God, when we can readily go where God only is to be found, and we have only to transact busi-

ness with him. If we were in company with a disliked individual, his presence would be tolerable if they were to continue; but if they were all to depart, and leave us alone with him, nothing would be so desirable as the door. O my soul, in similar circumstances would this be my case with regard to God and thee?

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## JULY 12.—MORNING.

"When thou wast under the fig tree, I SAW THEE."

John i. 48.

BEHOLD here THE OBSERVING SAVIOUR—"I saw thee."

Here was a *Divine* observer. For how did he see Nathanael in this concealment? Not by an eye of sense; or from the testimony of others; but by the attribute of omniscience. Accordingly it produced this belief in the mind of Nathanael, who was forced to exclaim, "Thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel." This perfection Peter ascribed to him when he said, "Lord, thou knowest all things." Nearness and distance, darkness and light, publicity and secrecy, are the same to him. How many proofs did he give in the days of his flesh that he "needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man!" He assured John, "All the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts." And he evinced his entire acquaintance with all their state, and the recesses of their experience. And in his time he will shew that he has been about our path and our lying down, and acquainted with all our ways, words, and thoughts:

for he will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil.

Here was an *approving* observer. His eyes run to and fro throughout the whole earth; but much of what he sees he abhors. He sees many alone; but God is not in all their thoughts. They abstract themselves from the world, but are still in it; and employ their leisure in trifling or mischief, or, as Isaiah expresses it, in "weaving spiders' webs, or in hatching cockatrice' eggs." But his heart was with Nathanael. Had his fellow-creatures peeped through the leaves of the fig tree, and seen him now reading, now musing, now kneeling, and praying with strong cryings and tears, they would have pitied or despised him. But the Lord looked on with approbation; for "the Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in them that hope in his mercy." Nathanael himself thought meanly enough of his performances, and perhaps feared they would be rejected. But, "the Lord is nigh unto all them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit." "I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus; Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the Lord my God. Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my bowels are troubled for him: I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord." "I have seen his ways, and I will heal him; I will restore comforts unto him and to his mourners."

Here was an *acknowledging* observer. He not only saw and approved, but avowed his regard. He

avowed it to Nathanael *himself*. How must he have been affected when he heard the sentence, "I saw thee!" Surely a blush spread over his face—But how would he be cheered and encouraged by such an assurance! "Ah," you say, "*he* could hear his voice—But does he speak now?" Not with audible sounds in the air, or in visions and dreams; there only enthusiasm is hearkening after him. But he has access to the mind, and bears witness with our spirits. Many now living, like Enoch, have the testimony that they please God—He has said to their soul, "I am thy salvation"—"I have loved thee."

And he not only avowed his regard to Nathanael, but he avowed it *before others*. He might have taken him aside, or have whispered it to *himself*: but no; he owns and commends him in the presence of the whole party. It was a testimony to a private transaction, but it was publicly expressed; and the attention of the company was turned towards him previously for this very purpose, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile." "Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee." What an illustration was here of the truth of his own words—"When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly!" Nathanael thus privately sought; and was thus publicly acknowledged—

And by whom? Not he who commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth. Seek the honour that cometh from him; and remember the way in which it is to be obtained: "Them that honour me, I will honour." He can make others take know-

ledge of them. He can make the Spirit of glory and of God to rest upon them. He can distinguish them by the care of his providence in common calamities. He can own them in their dying moments. And he will, he must confess them before his Father and the holy angels. The concealments of Christians are only partial and temporary. Their day is coming; it is the manifestation of the sons of God. Yet a little while and every cloud will be dispersed, and they shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Then the tears they have shed over their sins and infirmities, while they were deemed licentious in their principles; the prayers they offered for those who hated and persecuted them; the alms in which they suffered not the left hand to know what the right hand did; and all the sublime and the beautiful of religion that passed under the fig tree, shall be, not meritoriously, but graciously proclaimed before an assembled world. "Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God."

JULY 12.—EVENING.

"I die daily." 1 COR. xv. 31.

WE need not confine the meaning; but take the expression in all its latitude of import. In what sense could not Paul make this acknowledgment? In what sense is it possible, or proper, for us to make it?

First. He died daily, because he professed to preach the Gospel in constant hazard of life. "In

labours," says he, "more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Well might he affirm, "I die daily." In this sense, you say, the words are not applicable to you. It is true, from many of his dangers you are secure. Your religion is not exposing you to the loss of your life; or even of your liberty, or your substance. But do not even *you* die daily? Are not you in jeopardy every hour? Are you not surrounded by wicked and unreasonable men, whose vices and passions would destroy you, without the restraining providence of God? Are you not liable to a thousand accidents? What a frail thing is the human body! How strange that such a curious machine, composed of such a multitude of delicate organs, should continue so long in force and operation! Know you not that the heart beats seconds, and that sixty movements of the blood take place every minute—so that sixty times every minute the question is asked whether we are to live or die! We die daily!

Secondly. Paul could say this, as death was actually invading him daily. And this is the case with us. We are mortal, not only in destination, but in state. We decay while we receive sustenance. We

talk of dying! But is dying a future thing? Have we not always been dying?

“The moment we begin to live,  
We all begin to die.”

We talk of dying! Why many of us are half dead already; and some much more. Many of our connexions are dead; many of our comforts; many of our hopes. We have buried many of our opportunities, and days, and years—and every year, and every day, brings us nearer the *entire* end of the whole. It is absurd to confine dying to the act of separation between soul and body—This is only the finishing stroke—We die daily.

Thirdly. Paul, by a moral death, died daily. So should we. To die to an object, according to Scripture, is to have no more connexion with it, or attachment to it. Thus the Apostle says to the Romans, “Reckon ye yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin.” “How shall we, who are dead to sin, live any longer therein?” And this moral dying is frequently expressed by the word crucifixion, in allusion to the mode of it; and to remind us also of the cause, as well as the example. Hence it is said, “Our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin; for he that is dead is thus freed from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him.” Thus the Christian dies daily, by a course of mortification to sin, and the world, and the impression of things seen and temporal, and the power of temptation—“For they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh, with its affections and lusts.”

Fourthly. Paul died daily, by a readiness for his

dissolution, whenever it should take place. And the man who is likeminded will feel a concern to be prepared to die ; to die in a good state, and in a good frame ; to die safely ; to die cheerfully ; to die glorifying God ; and having an *abundant* entrance ministered unto him into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour. And this must commence with the Apostle's desire, "to win Christ, and be found in him." Nothing can be done to purpose, in our preparation for eternity, till we have said, "Into thine hand I commit my spirit ; thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth." The voice from heaven only pronounces those blessed who die in the Lord ; in a state of union and communion with him ; having his righteousness to give them a title to heaven, and his grace to give them a meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light.

But we should be concerned, not only to be habitually, but actually ready to die. That is, to be in a waiting posture ; having our loins girded and our lamps burning : keeping our consciences clear and calm ; drawing off our affections from earth : that when the summons comes we may be willing to depart, and not be constrained to plead, "O spare me a little, that I may recover strength before I go hence, and be no more." In the history of Charles V., emperor of Germany, we are told, that he resigned the reins of government and retired into a convent in Spain. There he resolved to celebrate his own obsequies. For this purpose, he ordered his tomb to be erected in the chapel of the monastery of St. Justus. Thither, at the proper season, all his domestics were ordered to march in funeral procession, carrying in their hands black tapers. The Emperor followed in his

shroud. Arrived at the place, he was laid in his coffin. The service of the dead was performed; and when the ceremonies were ended, the doors were closed, the attendants dismissed, and he was left alone. After remaining some time in the grave, he arose, and repaired to his apartment, filled with all those awful reflections which the solemnity was adapted to inspire.—Now we do not recommend the practice of such a gloomy and abject superstition. But you may sanctify the expedient, at least, in thought. You may anticipate an event that must befall you. And, oh that you were wise, that you understood this, that you would consider your latter end! Oh that you would remember, that the services you perform for others, will certainly be required for yourselves! Oh that, when you see man going to his long home, and the mourners going about the streets, you would say, "I also am accomplishing, as an hireling, my day; and in a little time, my neighbours, friends, and relations, will seek me—and I shall not be!"

—Would it be improper or useless for you, in imagination, to suppose yourselves—entering your sick-chamber—stretched upon a bed of languishing—dying—wrapped up in your winding-sheet—laid in your coffin—friends, for the last time, touching your cold cheek with their lips or the back of their hand—the lid screwed down—and your remains borne through the mutes at the door—and accompanied to the grave—and left there—while the spirit had returned to God, who gave it? In endeavouring to realize this condition, I ask, how would the world appear? What would you think of the censure or praise of men? What, of many of your pursuits? Would not this check the levity of the mind, and the pride of life?—

Would not also this contemplation break the force of surprise?

"Familiar thoughts can slope the way to death."

—But if we think not of the subject, the event will be a sudden precipice.

The sum of human wisdom is, to keep us from surprise in any thing: the sum of divine wisdom is, to keep us from surprise in death. We know not how soon the event may come. Nor in what manner it may befall us. It may not wait the close of three-score years and ten. It may not announce its approach by the common warnings of sickness. If we have not learned this truth already from our observations of mortality, neither should we be persuaded though one rose from the dead.

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#### JULY 13.—MORNING.

"I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them." Ezek. xxxvi. 37.

THAT is what he had been promising; and notwithstanding the freeness and certainty of the engagement. Such is the revealed "will" of God. And his will is law; and law from which there lies no appeal. Nothing, therefore, can dispense with the obligation of prayer. But let us look at this fact.

As we have no claims upon God, and all he does for us must be from pure mercy and grace, no one can deny that he has a *right* to determine the way in which his favours shall be conferred. Nor can it be questioned that he is the most *competent judge* in this case; for his understanding is infinite: he knows himself

and his relations: and he knows us and our welfare perfectly.

Yet let us not suppose that he acts arbitrarily, though he may act sovereignly. And let us remember, too, that his acting sovereignly does not consist in his acting without reasons, but in his being governed by reasons which are often far above out of our sight.

His wisdom and his goodness are to be seen here as plainly as his authority. Some vainly ask, Where is the propriety of prayer? Can prayer be necessary to inform a Being, perfect in knowledge? Or to excite a Being, always ready to do good? Or to induce a Being, with whom there is no variableness, to change his measures? But the question is beside the mark. What is not necessary as to God, may be necessary as to *us*. Religion is founded not in *his* wants, but in *ours*. Does not something of this kind obtain among all ranks and conditions of our fellow-creatures? All-parental as you are, do you always dispense with your child's asking for what he wants? As a master, though willing to forgive, do you not deem it needful to require the servant that offended you to confess his fault and implore pardon?

How many are the advantages arising from God's requiring us to ask, that we may have; and seek, that we may find! The exercise of prayer keeps alive a sense of our indigence and dependence. Every time I go to God in prayer, I am reminded that I am ignorant, and that he is wise; that I am weak, and that he is powerful; that I am guilty and miserable, and that he is merciful and gracious; that I am nothing, and that he is all in all.

Prayer, by bringing us into the presence of God,

will impress us with his excellences; and the intercourse we have with him will lead us to admire, and fear, and love, and resemble him. For we soon catch the spirit, and take off the manners of those with whom we are intimate; especially if they are above us, and we much esteem them. It is said, that those who are about the court have an air and an address peculiar to themselves; and that it is difficult, if not impossible, for another to assume it. A man who is much at the throne of grace, will betray it in a manner of feeling, speaking, and acting, that a religious pretender can never entirely exemplify.

Hereby, too, the blessing is more endeared, and enhanced. We never much regard what we acquire without application or effort. The effort is a kind of price; and we judge of the commodity by the cost. That which *blesses* us, is what relieves our *wants*; fulfils our *desire*; accomplishes our *hope*; crowns our *sacrifices*. God's blessings are not bestowed upon those who are incapable of feeling their value: they would *then* yield neither pleasure to the receiver, nor praise to the giver. His way, therefore, is to make us sensible of our need; to shew us the importance and excellency of the favours; and to draw forth our souls after them. Then we are in his way. Then we can plead his promise. For blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled.

## JULY 18.—EVENING.

"And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment and they had on their heads crowns of gold." Rev. iv. 4.

A THRONE is for royalty, and reminds us of a king. The King here is the King of kings, and the Lord of lords. He "hath established his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom ruleth over all." He has indeed two thrones. The first we approach on earth. It is the throne of grace. This is the place of our sanctuary, and the source of all our relief. The way to it we know: and "we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him." The second we approach in heaven. It is the throne of glory. This is too bright and dazzling for us to behold in this weak state of flesh and blood—for "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God." But there is a relation between these two thrones: and if we visit and value the one, and can now say, "It is good for me to draw near to God;" we shall soon be introduced to the other, and "be for ever with the Lord."

These four and twenty elders were representatives, not of the ministers, but of the whole Church: the number being made up of the twelve Patriarchs and the twelve Apostles; the former the emblems of the Jewish, and the latter of the Christian part of it.

We may observe the position of these favoured beings—Their seats "were round about the throne." God is the supreme good. With him is the fountain of life. He is therefore the centre of their attraction. Their happiness arises from their nearness to him.

We see their posture—They were "sitting." John

also saw them “standing before the throne,” and “falling down before the throne.” All is necessary to do justice to the subject. Their standing is a posture of readiness for service: and they serve him day and night in his temple. Their falling down is a posture of self-abasement, reverence, and adoration. But sitting shews distinction, and privilege. Sitting in the presence of the king, especially when upon his throne, was limited to great favourites or near relations. “When therefore Bath-sheba went unto king Solomon, to speak to him for Adonijah, the king rose up to meet her, and bowed himself unto her, and sat down on his throne, and caused a seat to be set for the king’s mother.” And the Lord Jesus not only calls his people his friends, but his kindred—“The same is my brother, and sister, and mother.” Sitting is refreshment and rest—we sit when we come in from travelling or from toil. And they who die in the Lord “rest from their labours.” It is also the posture of festive enjoyment—in allusion to which it is said, “Many shall come from the East and from the West, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven.”

We have also their apparel—They were “clothed in white raiment.” They had complied with the Saviour’s invitation, who had counselled them to buy of him white raiment, that they might be clothed: and we are informed what this was; “the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.” This is twofold. It is their *justifying* righteousness, of which Paul speaks when he says, “That I may be found in him; not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is of faith.” In this righteousness believers are not only absolved, but “exalted.” They

have more to appear in than Adam in Paradise: his righteousness was finite, theirs is infinite; his was the righteousness of a creature, theirs is "the righteousness of God."—And it is their *sanctifying* righteousness. We are required to "put on the Lord Jesus Christ," by a participation of his qualities, and an imitation of his example. The Scripture speaks of "the garment of praise;" and of being "clothed with humility." When we read of "keeping our garments," and "not defiling our garments," the reference is to our religious principles, and actions, and habits, which cover, and defend, and distinguish, and adorn the mind, as vestures do the body. And to these John refers when he says, "They have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." The righteousness of Christ needs no cleansing. But *their* obedience is defective and polluted, and needs a sacrifice to render it acceptable, and grace to render it rewardable.

Finally; we are informed not only of their dress, but of their dignity. Persons may be clothed, and not crowned. They may be crowned, but not with gold! But these "had on their heads crowns of gold." The glory to which they are advanced is of the highest degree, and of the most durable and valuable quality.—"Such honour have all his saints." It shews the amazing goodness of God towards them: for, originally, they were nothing, and viler than the earth. They were guilty and depraved. But he not only spares them, but forgives them; not only relieves them, but enriches and dignifies them. What a contrast between their lapsed and their restored condition! How low the one! How elevated the other! "He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth

the needy out of the dunghill ; that he may set him with princes, even with the princes of his people."

Here is scope and food for ambition—true ambition—commendable ambition. Let us despise the grovelling projects and pursuits of men of the world, who have their portion in this life, and, by patient continuance in well doing, seek for glory, honour, and immortality.

Oh ! says the Christian, the attainment seems incredible—But, unworthy as I am, it is not too great for me to expect—

“There shall I wear a starry crown,  
And triumph in Almighty grace ;  
While all the armies of the skies  
Join in my glorious Leader’s praise.”

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## JULY 14.—MORNING.

“My peace I give unto you.” JOHN xiv. 26.

PEACE sometimes signifies a confluence of temporal good things. This is not the meaning of it here. Our Saviour himself was poor, and a man of sorrows. And he said to his disciples, In the world ye shall have tribulation. Yet at the same time they were to have peace in him. This peace, therefore, must have been something which trouble could not hinder or injure. It must have been a spiritual privilege—composure of mind ; especially—for here is the source of the greatest perplexity and disquietude ; the calm of conscience, arising from a hope of our acceptance in the Beloved. Before it can be enjoyed, the awful breach between us and God must be healed ;

and the blessed partaker of it be able to say, Thou wast angry with me; but thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortest me. For there must be a sense of apprehension of God's favour, which is life. I may be pardoned; but if I am ignorant of my forgiveness, my anxieties and uneasinesses will remain. But when He says to my soul, I am thy salvation, then, being justified by faith, I have peace with God—not only peace with him above, but peace with him within—a peace that passeth all understanding.

For who can adequately conceive the value of this donation? We need not descend into the depths of hell, to inquire what the miserable victims of despair would give for a moment's enjoyment of it. Let those speak who have been convinced of sin, who have felt a wounded spirit, and, expecting to fall into the hand of the living God, have exclaimed, What must I do to be saved! What were the feelings of the manslayer, with the avenger of blood urging on at his heels! And what was the change he experienced, as soon as he had entered the appointed asylum, and could turn round and face the foe! Say ye—for ye have realized the blessed transition—ye who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before you—

“Tis a young heav'n on earthly ground,  
And glory in the bud.”

It is a cluster of the grapes of Eshcol. It weans from the world. It enlivens duty. It smooths the rugged path of adversity. It turns a dying chamber into the house of God and the gate of heaven.

But the Saviour calls it his peace—“*My* peace I give unto you.” It would be a low sense of this,

though a true one, that he came and preached it. It was his in an infinitely more expensive way. He procured it for us. He came not to tell us the way to heaven, but to be the way: not to shew us how to make our peace with God, but to make it. And he did make it: we were reconciled unto God by the death of his Son. The chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his stripes we are healed. He made peace by the blood of his Cross. And he applies it by the agency of his Holy Spirit; enabling us to believe, and enter into rest; and maintaining our hope in all the changes of life, and under a continued sense of our unworthiness and guilt.

Nor is it more his by derivation than distinction. Many have peace; but how unlike his! There is the peace of the sinner. This is of Satanic origin. The strong man armed keepeth his palace and his goods in peace. This peace is worse than war. It is not founded in conviction, but ignorance. It cannot endure thought. It is unworthy of the name of peace—There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked. How can a man retire, and go to sleep, when, if he dies before the morning, (and how easily may his bed become his grave!) God is under an oath to destroy him? He denies it, or forgets.—There is the peace of the self-righteous Pharisee; and the peace of the evangelical hypocrite: both of which will prove as the spider's web, and as the giving up of the ghost.—There is the peace of the worldling, who, by his fireside, or in the calm of his evening's walk, musing on his abundance, says, O my soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease; eat, drink, and be merry. But he may, that very night, have his soul required

of him; and then whose are those things which he has provided? What is it to be at ease in our circumstances, and to enjoy peace with our neighbours, and in our families, while we are at war with God, and his wrath abideth on us!

—But this man shall be the peace when the Assyrian cometh into the land! Look to him. Repair to him. “He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up all their wounds.” While you neglect him, you may seek peace, but you will never find it. But he cries—oh! hear him—“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” And is not this the very thing you want? Rest. Rest unto your souls? Believe him. Try his word. “Lo this, we have searched it, so it is; hear it, and know thou it for thy good.”

## JULY 14.—EVENING.

“O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee; my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is: to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary.” PSALM lxiii. 1, 2.

“As the man is, so is his strength:” and as the man is, so are his desires. “They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; and they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.” Let persons therefore judge of themselves by their desires; and if the stream does not rise so high as they could wish, let them observe the direction in which it flows. Let them ascertain that their desire is to the Lord, and the remembrance of him; and the promise assures them, “Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.”

Natural men live without God in the world. God is not in all their thoughts. If he attempts to enter their alienated mind, he is resisted as an intruder, and they say unto God, Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. But the spiritual delight themselves in the Lord. Their language is, "Where is God my Maker that giveth songs in the night?" "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee." "It is good for me to draw near to God."

We here see the *strength* of David's desire after communion with God, in the discoveries and operations of his glory and power in his house and ordinances. Stronger terms could not be employed to express it. But two things served to excite and enhance it.

First, his *present condition*—"My soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee, *in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is.*" He was now driven out of his country, exiled from his inheritance, and deprived of the songs and services of Zion. And in this condition what does he only or chiefly mourn over? Not the loss of his domestic and civil advantages, but of his religious. "When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me: for I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holy day." How, says he, I envy the Priests and Levites!—"Blessed are they that dwell in thy house, they will be still praising thee." How I envy the companies that journey to Salim, whatever be the weather or the road!—"Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee; in whose heart are the ways of them: who passing through the

valley of Baca make it a well ; the rain also filleth the pools. They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appeareth before God." How I envy the little birds that flee, and feed, and build, near the sacred place !—" Yea, the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God." There would my nest be—the home of my heart—" My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord : my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God."

It has grown into a proverb, that we never know the worth of blessings till we know the want of them : and the poet sings—

"How mercies brighten as they take their flight!"

Thus sickness endears health. The Jews, who had always been murmuring against Moses, mourned for him when dead many days; and no doubt sincerely, and even the more because of their former conduct. A minister may not be neglected : but it is when his hearers look up, and see his figure no more in the pulpit, and when they can no more hang upon his lips—it is then they begin to think how they have improved his labours, and are prepared for the next interview ; it is then they recall his sermons, and borrow, and transcribe the notes which others have taken down. Children may not have undervalued a mother: but the full estimation of her importance is not felt till her ears are closed to all their complaints, and their cares find no longer an asylum in her loved bosom—Upon this principle, the Lord acts, and it will account for many of his dispensations. If we do not esteem and are not thankful for his bene-

fits, he suspends or withdraws them. He can easily deprive you of any of those religious opportunities and advantages, from which you now suffer the most trifling excuses frequently to keep you. By the loss of hearing he can render you deaf to the voice of the charmer, charm he never so wisely. Accident or sickness may confine you from the place where his honour dwelleth. Or a change of business or residence may fix you in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is—

Secondly, his *former experience*: “To see thy power and thy glory *so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary.*” God is not confined to temples made with hands. His presence fills heaven and earth; and David had seen his power and his glory in all his works. But he knew the special grace of the promise, “In all places where I record my Name I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee.” And they who wait upon the Lord, and love the habitation of his house, have always had proof of this, and can say with David—“I have seen him in the sanctuary. I am not to be disputed out of the reality of my experience. I have found him there, and communed with him as a man talketh with his friend. The influence and effect of the intercourse have vouched for the nature of it. It was not delusion, or enthusiasm. It has rendered sin odious; it has weaned me from the world; it has drawn me heavenward; it has taught me to rejoice in Christ Jesus, and to have no confidence in the flesh.”

Others are strangers to this experience. But though mere formalists and false apostates never knew this, it is an incomparable advantage to the possessor. It confirms his confidence in divine truth;

he has the witness in himself. It tends to preserve him in the way everlasting; and serves to recall him when he backslides. For he may be allured and drawn away for a time by other lovers; but he can never lose the relish he has had in the enjoyment of his God and Saviour: and the remembrance will excite him and reproach him, and make him long for it to be with him as in months past, when the candle of the Lord shined upon his head, and when by his light he walked through darkness; when as yet the Almighty was with him—"Then shall she say, I will go, and return to my first husband, for then it was better with me than now." Yea, this will always serve as a stimulus to urge him on in following hard after God. A person might have been ready to say, If David had seen God, why was he not satisfied? But he was not satisfied *because* he *had* seen him. He did not indeed want more *than* God, but he wanted more *of* him. His enjoyment only increased his appetite, and his experience only provoked his desire—"To see thy power, and thy glory, *so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary.*"

But what brings others to the temple? What brings you? Is it custom? Is it curiosity? Do you come to please your connexions, or to appease conscience? It is surprising that some of you attend the service of the sanctuary so regularly and constantly as you do. You never saw his power and glory there. You never prayed to see them before you went. You never inquired whether you had seen them after you returned. This has been the case with some of you twenty, forty years. Will such an attendance do for a dying hour? Where now are all the ordinances you have been favoured

with? all the sermons you have heard? In the record of your guilt and condemnation, ready to be produced at the last day.

But a real Christian needs not threatening and authority to constrain him to attend the means of grace. He feels them attractive. He has found it good to be there—There he has found the house of God, and the gate of heaven, and can say—

“ I've seen thy glory and thy power,  
Through all thy temple shine;  
My God, repeat that heavenly hour,  
That vision so divine !”

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## JULY 15.—MORNING.

“ It came to pass, that when Jesus had finished these parables, he departed thence. And when he was come into his own country, he taught them in their synagogue, insomuch that they were astonished, and said, Whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works? Is not this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? And his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then hath this man all these things? And they were offended in him. But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and in his own house. And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief.” MATT. xiii. 53—58.

—His own country here means, not Bethany, where he was born, but Nazareth, where he had been brought up. It was a poor and despised place; so that it was proverbially asked, “ Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?” Yet there was he found, who is the King of glory!

Here he taught in their synagogues. *What* he taught is not recorded. But we may determine the

substance of it from his addresses on other occasions, and from the end which he always kept in view—"to seek and to save that which was lost." Of his *manner* of teaching, we cannot form an adequate conception. It was all his own. "Grace was poured into his lips." Even those who derived no saving advantage from it—even his enemies—said, "Never man spake like this man."

Accordingly, the people were astonished. Wonder has its place in religion; and there is every thing in the Gospel to call it forth. Yet many emotions of this kind are not powerful enough to produce any decisive result: and the subjects of them behold, and wonder, and perish. Thus it was here. They acknowledge his works to be mighty works, that is, miraculous; but are offended with his want of education, having been at no university; at the feet of no Gamaliel; never having learned letters. And also because he was not a man of birth and rank; but had relations in common life, and was himself engaged in manual employment. See how the god of this world blinds the minds of them that believe not. Who can stand before envy and prejudice? If he had the wisdom, and did the works—both of which they admitted, surely it was the more commendable, and the more marvellous, that he was so pre-eminent without any ordinary helps: and the more likely was he to be divinely inspired. There seemed no other way of accounting for the prodigy. And this seems to strike them. But men do not value things according to their real excellence. And when there is not a cordial liking to any subject, every circumstance, which would otherwise befriend, is converted into objection.

In answer to their offence, our Saviour remarks, "A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and in his own house." Usefulness depends upon acceptance; and acceptance upon esteem. Hence a bishop is to have a good report of them that are without; and hearers are commanded not only to receive such, but to hold them in reputation. Those who have been above a man in condition, do not like to come down and listen to him as an instructor and reprobate; and those who have been his equals have been too familiar with him to feel veneration towards him. Many things, though quite consistent with sanctity, yet breed not that reverence and respect which attach to a man that comes to us, so to speak, from a kind of distance, and is only seen through the medium of his sacred office. The case, here stated, is not universally and absolutely true. But it is so generally and comparatively: and even our Saviour himself was not an exception to it. After this, some of his servants need not be astonished at the treatment they experience. Neither should they fret and complain. They must take human nature as it is, and accommodate themselves, as much as they can, prudently and innocently, to the actual state of society. This governed the Master; and he assigns it as the reason why he preferred labouring elsewhere—"He said unto them, Ye will surely say unto me this proverb, Physician, heal thyself: whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in thy country. And he said, Verily I say unto you, No prophet is accepted in his own country."

What a conclusion is here!—"And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief."

Some he did. Mark says, He laid his hands on a few sick folk, and healed them—But what was the prevention of more? He generally required faith in his miraculous exertions. Hence the expressions—Be it unto thee according to thy faith—Believest thou that I am able to do this?—If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth. There were, indeed, some cases in which he wrought without this: at least, without the faith of the individual himself: though even then faith was found in those who applied on his behalf; or who brought him to Jesus.

But faith is *always* necessary in spiritual operations. He can produce faith within us; but he cannot carry on his works of grace without it. If he could, it would be in contradiction to his word; and by a blind, positive, physical force, without our knowledge, feeling, wishes, or designs. But this is not his way. He does every thing by faith. We are saved through faith. Hence the importance of believing. The first, the chief concern is, to get faith. Talk not of the sufficiency and excellency of the remedy—it cannot heal us unless it be applied; and it can only be applied by faith. The Gospel is the power of God to salvation—but it is only to every one that believeth.

There is something infinitely evil in unbelief, if we only consider what it *prevents*. It stands, and it is the only thing that does stand, between a sinner and the relief of the Gospel. Let him believe, and he is saved. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that believeth hath the Son. As to others, the wrath of God abideth on them; for nothing else can withdraw them from under it. The Jews could not enter into Canaan, because of their unbelief. It equally

bars heaven against us. But what mighty works attend faith! By faith we are justified. By faith we are sanctified. We stand, we walk, we live, we conquer, by faith.

And what an injurious bar to a Christian himself is unbelief! How much does it hinder him from achieving in a way of duty, and realizing in a way of privilege! What keeps him so weak and wavering? Unbelief. "If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established." If we depend on our frames and feelings, we draw from a summer brook, instead of the well of living waters. Pleasing experiences are cordials; but faith furnishes the soul's food. Faith in the promises would immediately tranquillize us, as it did Paul in the storm—"Be of good cheer; for I believe God that it shall be as it was told me." What keeps a Christian so poor in consolation? Unbelief. "Filled with all joy and peace in believing." "Believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory."

Who would not, then, by faith, let loose all the sources of Divine mercy and grace?

Who would not cry out, with tears, "Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief?"

## JULY 15.—EVENING.

"The remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity, nor speak lies; neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth: for they shall feed and lie down, and none shall make them afraid." ZEPH. iii. 13.

Of the subjects of divine grace here mentioned we may remark—

Their number: "a remnant." A remnant is a small part compared with the whole. We should be

liberal in our opinions of men, but we are not to sacrifice truth upon the altar of candour: and we should always speak, not from our feelings, but from our convictions; and always make our appeal to the law and to the testimony. Some think, few are wicked enough to be turned into hell, and that very little is required to constitute a claim to eternal life. But the sentiment is very injurious. It allows them to be satisfied with the state they are in themselves, and keeps them from endeavouring to save their fellow-creatures, whom they view as safe already. Nor is it less false. Take the characters of real Christians as they are found in the faithful word, and compare them with those who are living around you, and how few will come up to the representations! And does not the Scripture tell us that they are "jewels," for their rareness as well as worth; that they are "a little flock" in a large field; that they are "a garden" in a vast wilderness; that they are "as the shaking of an olive tree, two or three berries in the top of the uttermost bough, four or five in the outmost fruitful branches thereof?" Strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it. Yet God has never left himself without a witness: he has always had a people for his Name: and this has been our case as a nation; for, "except the Lord of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah." But though the remnant has been small comparatively, it has been considerable in the aggregate; and is now increasing; and will increase. We have seen great things; and our children will see yet greater; "for he shall cause them that come

of Jacob to take root: Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit."

Of their sanctity: "they shall not do iniquity." This must be taken with some restriction. We would not plead for sin; but we must not oppose the testimony of God which assures us that "there is not on earth a just man that doth good and sinneth not." "If we say we have no sin," says John, "the truth is not in us." And James says, "In many things we offend all." But they are not "workers of iniquity," and "evil doers." Sin does not reign in them; they do not obey it in the lusts thereof. There is no one sin in which they knowingly live. They hate every false way; and esteem all his commandments concerning all things to be right. He that has "true holiness" cannot be satisfied without perfect holiness. He therefore prays to be sanctified throughout body, soul, and spirit: and whatever falls short of this, is matter of grief and humiliation to him.

Of their sincerity: "they shall not speak lies, neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth." A part is put for the whole; and the quality of their speech is designed to express the inward temper of their minds. They shall be Israelites indeed, in whom there is *no* guile. Every thing is lies, religiously, that does not accord with the state of the heart; and only an upright spirit can maintain a deceitless tongue before God. The fruit partakes of the nature of the tree. What is in the well will be in the bucket: what is in the warehouse will be in the shop. "A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth good things; for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh."

Infirmity is not hypocrisy. Christians are not mere pretenders. They do not draw on a fine white glove over a filthy leprous hand. They are not like a painted sepulchre, fair without, and rottenness within. They are not mere actors on a stage; but are really what they appear to be. Their integrity is peculiarly known by this—there is nothing of which they are more afraid than self-deception. They therefore come to the light. They examine themselves by the rule of the word. They implore the inspection of God himself: “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”

Of their privileges: “they shall feed and lie down, and none shall make them afraid.” Thus their blessedness is expressed pastorally, and includes three things. First, pasture: they shall “feed.” As his sheep are men, their food must be something intellectual and spiritual; and as they are new creatures, it must be something congenial with their new appetites. And we read of the provision of God’s house, and of his people being satisfied with his goodness. The ordinances of religion are the places in which they are fed; but they are not the food itself. What says the Saviour? “I am the bread of life.” “He that eateth me, even he shall live by me.” Secondly, repose: and shall “lie down.” In an eastern climate, and in a warm day, how desirable would the refreshment of rest be! and therefore the Church says, Tell me, not only where thou feedest, but “where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon.” And this David enjoyed and acknowledged; he not only feedeth me beside the still waters, but he “maketh

me to lie down in green pastures." I cannot explain this to you if your own experience does not. I cannot enable you to comprehend what that peace with God is which they feel who are justified by faith; what that contentment is which springs from communion with an infinite good; what that dwelling at ease is which the soul realizes that casts its burden upon the Lord, and is careful for nothing. Thirdly, security: and "none shall make them afraid." Sheep are the most timid of all animals; every appearance and movement alarms them. And this is too much the case with those they represent. But things are spoken of in the Scripture according to their proper tendency and effect. The righteous are bold as a lion—that is, they ought to be so; their duty requires it; their principles justify it. Nothing should make them afraid; because nothing shall, nothing can injure them. God has amply provided for their confidence; and when they can apprehend it by faith, they can be in quiet from the fear of evil; they can "dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods." Happy art thou, O Israel! who is like unto thee, O people saved of the Lord! Visit me, O Lord, with thy salvation; and let me glory with thine inheritance.

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## JULY 16.—MORNING.

"Call to remembrance the former days." HEB. x. 32.

THIS will soon convince us, that there is nothing new under the sun! and keep us from saying, "What is the cause that the former days were better than these?" In many respects we have the advantage.

In knowledge, in civilization, and liberty, and trade, and the conveniences and comforts of life, and, above all, in spiritual privileges, we far surpass our predecessors.

If we look back to the period of Judaism, we shall have reason to say, "Blessed are our eyes, for they see; and our ears, for they hear: for many prophets and righteous men desired to see the things that we see, and did not see them; and to hear the things that we hear, and did not hear them." They had the type, we have the reality; they had the promise, we have the accomplishment; they had the dawn, we have the day—God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.

If we look back to the period previous to the entrance of the Gospel into our own country, What were our ancestors? Naked painted savages in the woods; oppressed by cruel rites; enslaved by idolatry; being without Christ; strangers to the commonwealth of Israel; having no hope, and without God in the world.

We were called Christians long before the Reformation. But look at the period prior to that auspicious event. In what a state of mental degradation were we—religion superstition—the service performed in an unknown tongue—the Scriptures kept from the common people—and nothing suffered to peep or mutter, but as priestcraft gave leave!

And when men began to know the words of life, and to serve God in spirit and in truth, what interdictions were they under; and to what fines, imprisonments, tortures, deaths, were they exposed by the spirit of persecution—Popish and even Protest-

ant! Remember the former times, in which your forefathers endured a great fight of affliction for conscience' sake. Think how they would have rejoiced to see a day in which we sit under our own vine and fig tree, and none can make us afraid; in which the Gospel is spreading far and wide; in which individuals, and churches, and communities, combine to make manifest the savour of the Redeemer's knowledge in every place. Christians should judge by a rule of their own; and deem those the best times in which the best cause flourishes most. We therefore live in the most preferable æra the world ever yet witnessed.

But it is well for us also to remember the earlier periods of our own personal history and experience; our days of religious nothingness, when we never called upon his Name, and had no fear of God before our eyes. What feeling does the review of these days require!

But other days, better days, blessed days, followed, after we knew God, or rather were known of him. *He* remembers these: "Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith the Lord; I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown. Israel was holiness unto the Lord, and the first-fruits of his increase. And shall we forget them? Can we forget them?

"How sweet their memory still!"

In one respect, the review must be humbling. For how little has our practice corresponded with our profession! or our proficiency with our advantages! Yea, instead of advancing, have we not stood still,

or rather have we not gone back? We read of "the first ways of David." They were, alas! his best. The king of Israel never equalled the shepherd of Bethlehem. When at ease in Zion, his soul prospered much less than when he was hunted like a partridge upon the mountains. And have we never sighed, "Oh that it was with me as in months past!" Here is the charge, "I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love." Let us not deny it, but remember from whence we are fallen, and repent, and do our first works.

Are we in trouble? Do we see no way for our escape? Does God seem to have forgotten to be gracious? Let us remember the years of the right hand of the Most High. His love, and power, and truth are still the same. And because he has been my help, therefore, under the shadow of his wing will I rejoice.

## JULY 16.—EVENING.

"Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast." HEB. vi. 19.

AMONG the advantages by which a Christian is distinguished he is peculiarly characterized by the possession of hope. This hope is called "a good hope through grace." The goodness of it is to be seen in its utility and certainty.

The usefulness of it is here expressed by a metaphor. We have this hope as "an anchor of the soul." It will be easy to shew the simple force of the comparison. The ship is anchored even in the harbour or port, to keep it from being driven while lading or unlading: and to this we liken the use of hope in the

common concerns and engagements of the Christian life. Without it we could not be fixed, trusting in the Lord; but should be all fluctuation and unsteadiness: and instability is incompatible with excellency—"Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel." But the main use of the anchor is to hold the vessel in rough and tempestuous weather, when the mariner is unable to steer without danger of running on rocks or quicksands. This world which we have to cross is a sea; and we shall be piteously mistaken if we reckon upon nothing but calms or breezes. Does the word of God encourage such an expectation? Does it not forbid us to consider storms as strange things? In all ages, have not the afflictions of the righteous been many? And what is to secure them in persecutions, losses, troubles personal and relative, conflicts without and fears within?

"Amidst temptations sharp and long,  
My soul to this dear refuge flies,  
Hope is my anchor firm and strong,  
When tempests roar and billows rise."

He that walketh in darkness and hath no light is to "trust in the Lord, and to stay upon his God." This David recommended to others: "Let Israel hope in the Lord." This he enjoined upon his own soul: "Hope thou in God." This he approved from his own experience, for he had found it available: "I had fainted unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living."

We also read of the "patience of hope," because hope is necessary to cheer and sustain it. In nature there are wintry months between the sowing and the reaping. And in the Christian there is the prayer of

faith, the work of faith, the fight of faith, the life of faith, the walk of faith, before he receives “the end of his faith, the salvation of his soul.” Though all the promises of God are faithful, many of them are not immediately fulfilled. Here then patience is necessary, and sometimes “long patience.” But we are naturally full of impatience; and therefore we should be in danger of giving up the case as lost, and saying, with the unbelieving nobleman, “What should I wait for the Lord any longer?” Did not this hope whisper “Wait on the Lord, be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart?” Wait, I say, on the Lord. Though he delays, he cannot refuse. The delay also is founded in kindness and in wisdom. The Lord is a God of judgment; and blessed are all they that wait on him. All will be well—all is well—“All the ways of the Lord are mercy and truth.”

But, says Cowper—

“Dangers of every shape and name  
Attend the followers of the Lamb,  
Who leave the world’s deceitful shore,  
And leave it to return no more.”

Many of them therefore do not regard suffering only—There are the perils of indulgence, of ease, of agreeable connexions, of success in business, of wealth, of fame: and we know who hath said, “The prosperity of fools shall destroy them.” Here again “we are saved by hope.” What is the smile of a man to the honour that cometh from God only? What is earth to a better country, “even a heavenly?” How came Moses to refuse to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter? “He had respect unto the

recompence of the reward." How came Abraham to "sojourn in the land of promise as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise?" "He looked for a city which had foundations, whose builder and maker is God." Thus the Hebrews took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing in themselves that they had a better and an enduring substance. Thus it is that we are preserved from the power of worldly temptations. Narrow and barren commons may urge the sheep to wander; but it is otherwise with the green pastures and still waters. Fill a Christian with all joy and peace in believing, and he has no room to "covet after evil things"—His exposure is when "the consolations of God are small with him."

But this hope, as an anchor of the soul, is "sure and steadfast;" and as to *certainty*, the truth far exceeds the figure. In other cases, the anchor does not always save the ship, but the ship is driven from its holdings and dashed to pieces. But this hope always secures the Christian; there never was an instance in which it was known to fail. This is an incomparable recommendation. Nothing is so wretched as the disappointment of hope. And yet what is more common than the wreck of human expectation with regard to all earthly things? But nothing can equal the disappointment of *that* hope which regards the soul and eternity! How dreadful for a man to live in expectation of all that God has promised, and come short at last: to go with confidence to the very door, and knock, Lord, Lord, open to us; and then hear from within, I never knew you—Depart! Yet such will be the issue of

every religious hope but *this*. It is *this*, and this alone, that "maketh not ashamed." But this is as "sure and steadfast" as God himself can make it.

And therefore the thing is, whether we can say, "which hope we have." It is not only desirable, but possible to know this. Only, in deciding, there is nothing concerning which we should be more careful. What reason can we shew for having *this* hope in us? Have we any better evidence than "a form of knowledge," or "a form of godliness," while we "deny the power thereof?" How is this hope founded? Is the Lord our righteousness and strength its only basis? How does it operate? For a dead hope is no better than a dead faith. The hope of Christians is a living and a lively hope: it will induce us to value; to seek after; and long to enjoy and resemble the glorious object of it. "He that hath *this* hope in him purifieth himself even as he is pure."

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## JULY 17.—MORNING.

"Ye have an unction from the Holy One." 1 JOHN ii. 20.

WHO is this Holy One? Unquestionably the Lord Jesus. It was one of the names by which he was known in the days of his flesh. The devils knew him by it; and said, We know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God. Ye denied, said Peter and John to the Jews, the Holy One and the Just. He was so called from the innocency of his life; the purity of his nature; and the eminency of his perfections; and therefore, in a sense, it is applicable to no mere creature. God is often called the Holy One, in the Old Testa-

ment: and, alluding to the very place where holiness is thence ascribed to him by the Seraphim, the Evangelist affirms, "This said Isaiah, when he saw his glory, and spake of him." He is relatively, as well as personally, holy; and evangelically, as well as legally. He is as holy in his Gospel as in his Law. He is as holy in his dispensations as in his ordinances. He is holy in all his ways, and righteous in all his works. He came by water as well as by blood; and gave himself for us, to redeem us from all iniquity, and to purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works—And though he will bring millions from the depraved race of Adam to glory, he will bring them all there, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.

And what is this unction from Him? John was a Jew; and well knew that oil, unction, anointing—it is all the same thing, was used to consecrate, to beautify, to refresh and delight. The word therefore is used here for the influence of the Holy Spirit. And this is derived from the Lord Jesus. This was typified in the case of Aaron, when the oil was poured upon his head, and went down to the skirts of his garments. So here the unction descends from the head of the Church to the lowest members of the body. Hence it is so often called the Spirit of Christ. It comes to us through his mediation; and it comes to us from his possession. For it was not as Mr. Howe observes, the design and effect of the sufferings and death of Christ, that the Spirit should be given immediately to any individuals; but that the whole dispensation should be lodged in his hands, and the administration be the honour of his office. He received gifts for men; and this was the chief of

them. Being by the right hand of God exalted, says Peter, and having received of the Father the promise of the Spirit, *he* hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear. He therefore said to his disciples, "It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you: but if I depart, I will send him unto you"—"And he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak; and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you."

Thus it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell. And of his fulness, says every saved, every sanctified sinner, have all we received, and grace for grace.

Have we this unction from the Holy One? If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his Destitute of this, our religion will be a form of godliness, without the power; the practice, without the principle; duty, without delight—a task—weariness—vanity. We can only know that he abideth in us by the Spirit which he hath given us.

If strangers to the benefit, let us seek it. We know to whom we are to apply. He is able, he is willing, to give us the supply of his own Spirit. How encouraging to address ourselves to one who loved us, and gave himself for us: who says, if any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink; who never sent one suppliant empty away—who never will—never can—for he cannot deny himself!

Cherish this unction. It is what the Apostle means, when he says, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, by which ye are sealed to the day of redemption." Not only does gratitude require this, because

of what the Spirit has already done for you; but a concern for your own welfare. What can you do, without his aids and comforts? In consequence of his sin, David feared the entire loss of his agency: and therefore cried, Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy holy Spirit from me. Yea, he had suffered the loss of the consolation and support which he alone can give—*Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free Spirit.*

Let us diffuse this unction. Let us make manifest the savour of the Redeemer's knowledge, in every place; in every condition; in every company. Let it so abound in our conduct, temper, and discourse, that we may be distinguished and recommended by it. So that all may take knowledge of us that we have been with Jesus.

## JULY 17.—EVENING.

"And when they had gone through the isle unto Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Bar-jesus: which was with the deputy of the country, Sergius Paulus, a prudent man; who called for Barnabas and Saul, and desired to hear the word of God. But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith. Then Saul, (who also is called Paul,) filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him, and said, O full of all subtlety and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand. Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord." ACTS XIII. 6—12.

WHEN in their ministerial tour from Antioch Paul and Barnabas reached Paphos, they not only found

there the celebrated temple of Venus, with all the sensualities attached to it; but had to encounter another and a peculiar adversary. There is no going on in the cause of God without opposition—for

“ . . . . Satan rages at his loss,  
And hates the doctrine of the Cross.”

And he never succeeds better than when he throws himself into worldly professors and false teachers; and employs fraud rather than force, and address rather than open persecution. When therefore Sergius Paulus, a prudent man, called for the Apostles, being desirous of hearing the word of God; Elymas the sorcerer withheld them, and sought to turn away the deputy from the faith, that is, from the hearing of it. A willingness to hear is often a token for good, even if for the time it does not arise from the best motive. It brings people to the pool, where they are in readiness for the troubling of the water. They are in the way of the means; and faith cometh by hearing. We should therefore endeavour to bring people under the sound of the Gospel. We may learn our duty from the enemy of our souls. He does all in his power to keep people from hearing, especially the great. And with them he is often successful. They think it is proper for others, but excuse themselves—not considering that none need it so much, because of their dangers, and because of the influence of their example.

—But what did Paul? Observe, first, his reproof. “Full of the Holy Ghost, he set his eyes on him, and said, O full of all subtlety and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the

Lord?" We are not fond of hard names and harsh language; and there is nothing we should more guard against than mingling our passions in the cause of truth: "for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God." The same actions require not only the same circumstances, but the same warrant. When therefore the Samaritans would not receive our Saviour when he was going up to Jerusalem, and James and John seeing this said, "Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?" he turned, and rebuked them, and said, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them." Paul not only knew the depravity of this wretch, how he misrepresented their doctrine, and calumniated their designs; but he was "filled" with the Spirit as "a spirit of judgment and of burning;" he spoke in the name of the Lord, and as a prophet, whose appeal was sanctioned by the event.

Observe, secondly, his denunciation. "And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand." The doom had five characters. It *corresponded with the crime*—Here was blindness for blindness; judicial blindness for criminal blindness. It was *suddenly inflicted*—"Immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness." It was comparatively *mild*—It was only the loss of sight: but Ananias and Sapphira were struck dead. It was *temporary*—He was not to "see the sun for a season." It was *useful*—Like other judgments at the beginning of the

Gospel, it was to guard Christianity from abuse, and to awaken attention, that others might hear and fear, and turn unto the Lord. And as this was the design, so this was the effect of it—

—And we see that the word of the Lord is not bound. Men may shew their malignity to it, but they cannot hinder its spread or its efficacy. Yea, their oppositions will be more than harmless, and turn out rather unto the furtherance of the Gospel. Thus we here find the wrath of man praising God, by giving rise to a miracle which produced a growing effect on the mind of Sergius Paulus. What was this effect? “Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord.”

First, “he believed.” We know that there is a faith which is not saving and influential. It is the effect not of principle, but impression; evidence for the time overpowering doubt, but leaving the heart unchanged. James speaks much of this belief. And our Saviour often met with it. Thus, “when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover, in the feast day, many believed in his Name, when they saw the miracles which he did. But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man.” How many are there now living who admit every truth their ministers teach into their judgments; but there they lie like bodies in coffins, dead being alone! We hope, however, this was not the case here; but that the deputy believed to the saving of the soul: not only assenting, but acquiescing, trusting in the Lord Jesus, and becoming his follower.

Secondly, he was also "astonished at the doctrine of the Lord." Everything was adapted to produce this feeling in *him*. The doctrine was perfectly *novel*. We, who are familiar with it from our youth up, cannot well imagine how it must strike the mind of those to whom it is introduced for the first time! They may well be said to be called out of darkness into marvellous light. Yet there is a degree of this in every converted soul. Experience is very different from theory: and when we are taught of God, we have other views of those very things of which we have read and heard before. The *nature* of it surprised him. It contained the deep things of God. Great is the mystery of godliness—God manifest in the flesh—One dying for all—He who knew no sin, made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him—Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith! How mysterious the scheme! And yet as pure as it is deep, requiring us to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, and to avoid the very appearance of evil. The *efficiency* also would strike him. He now viewed the Apostles as the oracles of God, and considered what they said as his word—and so it was—and he saw it was. For no sooner had Paul spoken, than it was supernaturally accomplished. And this could be justly extended to every thing else: for "the word of God is quick and powerful." How much more of this can we see than he saw! Since then, how mightily has it grown and prevailed! How has it banished idolatry—tamed the savageness of the multitude—comforted the desponding—changed the disposition of the ungodly—and enabled those who have every thing to enslave them

to earth to live with their conversation in heaven! What other doctrine has ever been so glorified?

And this is the word which by the Gospel is preached unto us. Many despise it and turn from it. How do we regard it? Do we believe it? And does our life vouch for our faith? Can we say, with David, "Thy testimonies are wonderful, therefore thy servant loveth them"? Some would consider a regard that rose to admiration and astonishment as weakness of mind. But it is more than justified by prophets, by angels, by God himself, who has magnified his word above all his Name. How little and mean are other things at which we wonder! Here is enough to fix, and fill, and employ the mind forever!

But let us not be found in the number of those who "wonder and perish." Let us pray that the Holy Spirit may lead us into all truth: that we may know the excellency of it from its influence in our selves; and, recommending it to others, be able to say, with John, "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ."

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JULY 18.—MORNING.

"God, who is rich in mercy." EPHES. ii. 4.

In a thousand things God entirely eludes our research. In everything he surpasses our comprehension. But we know that he is merciful; we are sure that he is rich in mercy. And we cannot be too thankful, that the eminence of an attribute, so essen-

tial to our happiness and hope, is not obscurely revealed, but so plainly and fully made known, in the works of his hands; the dispensations of his providence; the promises of his word; the provisions of his house; and the Son of his love.

For who does not need this assurance? The self-righteous Pharisee, who thanks God that he is not as other men are—he does not require it. And the proud pretender, who is free from all sin—he does not require it—he formerly required it; but he has now attained, he is now already perfect. But there are four classes of characters to whom it must be like life from the dead.

First. The victims of affliction. These are not rarely to be met with in this vale of tears. To such we would say—We ask you not what your distresses are; but if oppressed, pray, Lord, undertake for me. Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee. Repair not, under the pressure of woe, to the rope, or the bowl of intoxication, or the dissipations of the world—this is like Saul's going to the witch of Endor; but go to the throne of the heavenly grace, imploring the pity of the God of all comfort. He does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men. It is your welfare that has called forth this seeming severity. He knows your frame. He remembereth that you are dust. He lays upon you no more than he will enable you to bear. He will not always chide; neither will he keep his anger for ever. When the benevolent end of the dispensation is answered, he will readily lay aside the rod, and say, "Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child? For since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my bowels are troubled

for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord. Set thee up waymarks, make thee high heaps; set thine heart towards the highway, even the way which thou wentest: turn again, O virgin of Israel, turn again to these thy cities."

Secondly. Convinced penitents. They were formerly always extenuating their guilt: now they are dwelling only upon the aggravations of it. Lately they seemed unsusceptible of alarm: now they refuse to be comforted. Such is their unworthiness! The number and greatness of their sins! They are cast out of his sight! And there is only, for *them*, a certain fearful looking-for of judgment, and fiery indignation! But, awakened sinner, remember, there is hope in Israel concerning this thing. There is everlasting consolation, and good hope, through *grace*. With the Lord there is mercy; and with him is plenteous redemption. Judge not of his goodness by a human standard. Who is a God like unto him? View him not through the medium of your own feelings. Believe his own word, wherein he assures you, that he is ready to forgive; that he will abundantly pardon. Believe his oath, wherein he swears by himself—"As I live, saith the Lord, I desire not the death of him that dieth; wherefore turn, and live ye."

Thirdly. Desponding backsliders. These, after walking in the way everlasting, have fallen by their iniquity: and perhaps feel more anguish of mind, than when they were first led to repentance. They say, and they say justly, "No one has sinned with such enhancement as I have done. I have sinned in the dearest relations, and under the highest obligations, and against the greatest advantages. I have sinned

after being made to know what an evil and bitter thing sin is: and also after tasting that the Lord is gracious. My sin has been more injurious in its effects than that of others; it has more dishonoured religion, and grieved the Holy Spirit of God." All this they ought to feel—Yet must not *they* forget, that He is rich in mercy. It is this belief that will break the heart most, and make it sorrow after a godly sort. It is this alone that will lead them forward, with weeping and supplication, saying, Lord, take away all iniquity: create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. And He—will He refuse to reply, "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely; for mine anger is turned away from him"?

Fourthly. Persevering believers. These have holden on their way: and, having obtained help of God, continue to this day. They ought, therefore, to feel thankful. Yet it becomes them, also, to be humble. Indeed, the more they advance in the divine life, the more will they be dissatisfied with themselves. They will be deeply affected with a sense of their unprofitableness, and numberless infirmities. If their outward conduct has been fair to men, they know how little their heart has been right with God. They know the sins of their holy things would be enough to condemn them, if God should bring them into judgment with him. *Their* language, therefore, still is, God be merciful to me, a sinner. This is *their* only relief—He is rich in mercy. And living—and dying—they "look for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life."

## JULY 18.—EVENING.

"And some days after Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do." ACTS xv. 36.

NOTHING can be more pleasing to a Christian than to study the life of our Saviour: to follow him from place to place; to hear him preaching the Gospel of the kingdom; to see him feeding the hungry, opening the eyes of the blind, raising the dead, and going about doing good. We may feel a considerable degree of the same pleasure in reading the Acts of the Apostles. The Apostles in the Church of God were next to him in order of time, and next to him in dignity, and next to him in supernatural endowments, suffering, and usefulness. But in all things he must have the pre-eminence. He is fairer than the children of men. In following him, we find nothing to scandalize or to distress. No censure ever attaches to his temper or conduct; he is always in character with himself as the Holy One of God; and we exclaim, with the multitude, "*He hath done all things well.*" But it is otherwise when we follow men, good men, great men, inspired men—"The best of men are but men at the best."

An instance of which comes before us this evening in the dispute between Paul and Barnabas. It will yield us several instructive meditations.

We begin with Paul's proposal to Barnabas—"Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do." The manner in which he speaks of the persons regarded is observable; he calls them "our

brethren." Our Lord had said to his disciples, Call no man master, and be not ye called masters ; for one is your master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren. And they strictly adhered to the command. Paul does not avail himself of his office, talents, or success, to lord it over God's heritage. He exercised no dominion over their faith, but was a helper of their joy. The fraternal relation results from our very nature ; for God has made of one blood all the nations of men, and they are all derived from one father, the first man, Adam—so that wherever I see a human being I see a brother. But the Apostle here refers to the subjects of Divine grace. They are new creatures ; they are born again : but they are born of the same Spirit, they are redeemed by the same blood, justified by the same righteousness, heirs of the same glory : and while partaking of "the common salvation," a communion subsists between them, unaffected by any difference of opinion, or distinction of circumstances.

These were universally esteemed by Paul ; and he could say, "Grace be with *all* them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity." But the persons he now wished to see were known to him and Barnabas. They had been blessed under their former ministry ; for they had preached to them the word of the Lord before. It is natural for those who are spiritual fathers to feel a peculiar affection for their own offspring. If we have planted a tree we feel interested in its life and growth. What wonder then that Paul should wish to water what they had planted ; or that, having sown the seed, he wished to see the blade, the ear, and full corn in the ear ?

And the state of things required their inspection.

The first churches were exposed to a thousand discouragements and dangers. How soon were the Galatians "bewitched" from the truth, and lost the blessedness they had spoken of! There were deceitful workers at Corinth, and one wretch, as specious as he was injurious, who transformed himself into an angel of light. At Ephesus from among themselves arose men, speaking perverse things, and drawing away disciples after them. Wherever the good seed was sown, the enemy was sure to sow tares. It was natural therefore that Paul should be concerned to visit "every city" where they had laboured, to know their estate, to refute any error in doctrine, to oppose any corruption in practice, to warn the unruly, to comfort the feeble-minded, to uphold the weak, and to help them much who had believed through grace—How well could he say, "That which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not?"

See the zeal of this man of God—"Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do."—He was never weary in well-doing. He made the end of one good work the beginning of another; and considered nothing done while any thing remained to be done. What he said of himself as a Christian applied equally to his character as a preacher and an apostle: "I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." To those who were ignorant of the principle that

actuated him in these “labours more abundant, and deaths oft,” he appeared like a man deranged; and he was so, when judged by the wisdom of the world, which is foolishness with God. But says he, “Whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God, or whether we be sober, it is for your cause. For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.” Hence too, when he mentions his losses and persecutions, he adds, “For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.”

But Paul’s zeal was always according to knowledge. Like the healthful heat of the body, it made him glow, but did not like a fever burn up his moisture. No person of so much natural sanguineness of temper, and so much spiritual fervour, ever had so much prudence, or was so authorized from his own example to say to others, “Be ye not unwise, but understanding what the fear of the Lord is”—Hence his wish here not to go alone, but to take Barnabas with him as before. He knew that two were better than one. If one fell, the other would lift him up again. If one was tempted, the other could warn him. If one was distressed, the other could comfort him. If one was perplexed, the other could counsel him. He remembered that his Lord and Master, in the mission of the Seventy, had “sent them forth two by two, into every city and place whither he himself would

come." He also had said, "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them by my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

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## JULY 19.—MORNING.

"And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark. But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work." ACTS xv. 37, 38.

We have heard Paul's proposal to Barnabas to revisit together the scenes of their former travels and labour. Here we see the difficulty that occurred in the execution of it. The occasion of it was Mark; not Mark the evangelist, but John Mark. He was the son of the sister of Barnabas. When Barnabas and Paul carried alms from Antioch to Jerusalem, they brought this young man back with them; and when they were sent forth from Antioch to spread the Gospel, they also took him along with them. But when they came to Perga in Pamphylia, he left Paul and his uncle to pursue their journey, and returned to Jerusalem.

On the present occasion, Barnabas wished to take him again: but Paul was unwilling. Both had their reasons. Barnabas hoped he had been humbled for his fault, and that in this second excursion he would wipe off the disgrace of the first. Besides, he was his nephew: and relative affection will often plead very hard. Paul reflected on our Lord's words; "No man having put his hand to the plough, and

looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." He felt a very different spirit in himself; and deemed it right to notice a misconduct which, if tolerated in a public character, might be injurious by example. Perhaps both these good men erred a little; the one being too partial, the other too severe. But with regard to the young man himself, we may observe two things.

First, though we know not the particular reason for his delinquency; whether it was the attraction of home (for he had a mother living in Jerusalem), or the dread of difficulties and dangers in such a missionary life; he had done wrong in going back; and his declension not only affected his own reputation, but laid the ground of this disagreement and discord. How much depends often upon one mistake! We can never calculate the evils that may arise from it as to ourselves or others. Let us therefore walk circumspectly; and ponder the path of our feet, that our goings may be established.

Secondly, the severity of Paul and the kindness of Barnabas were probably blessed to him. It is certain that he acted a better part afterwards: for Paul had subsequently a good opinion of him; and was not backward to express it. Hence he says to Timothy, "Take Mark, and bring him with thee, for he is profitable to me for the ministry." "And Aristarchus my fellow-prisoner saluteth you, and Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas, (touching whom ye received commandments: if he come unto you, receive him.") Hence we infer—That we should be moderate in our censures. We may have cause to blame an individual; but we know not what he may become. He that is now like a bruised reed may prove like a cedar

in Lebanon ; and he that is now only as smoking flax may flame for God, and kindle many others. We also learn—That those we have censured for their faults we should be forward to encourage and recommend upon their improvement. Many, when they have reflected upon a character, are delighted to find their reflections justified. This shews a littleness of mind and a vileness of heart. A man, in proportion as he is truly good and great, will be glad to learn that he was mistaken in his moral forebodings. “Charity rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth.”

## JULY 19.—EVENING.

“And the contention was sharp between them.” ACTS xv. 39.

THIS was sad. Persons may differ, but agree to differ, leaving each other to be fully persuaded in their own mind. Abraham and Lot differed: but “Abraham said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren.” And the one nobly gave up; and peace was the reward. But here neither would yield; and “the contention was sharp between them.” Good men are often less persuadable and manageable in disputes than others; and it is to be accounted for from their conscientiousness, and the greater importance they attach to their opinions. In these cases they may be, and very often are mistaken: but while they think the cause of truth, the advancement of religion, and the honour of God, are involved in the side they take, we need not wonder that they feel a kind of martyr-firmness as well as zeal. None of our pa-

sions assume so much the pretence of rectitude as our anger: but when we are jealous for the Lord of hosts, what fervour and faithfulness should we not display! But the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. “The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.”

Good men, and men eminently pious, have their infirmities and imperfections. Even Moses spake unadvisedly with his lips. Elias also was a man subject to like passions as we are. When Paul and Barnabas had healed the cripple at Lystra, and were in danger of being worshipped, they rent their clothes, and said, “Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you.” And had these intentional idolators been now present, and witnessed this angry contention, they would have had proof of it; and have no longer said, “The gods are come down in the likeness of men.” Many a sacrifice of praise and confidence that we are ready to offer to a fellow-creature would be spoiled by a little more intimacy with them—“He that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow.”

Here we see, what we have many occasions to remark, the impartiality and fairness of the sacred writers. They give us no “faultless monsters;” but describe the failings as well as the excellences of the dearest servants of God. They are never afraid of the honour of religion on this account; neither should we—

But let us remember for what purpose such faults

are recorded in the Scriptures. It is not to render us careless in our walk, or to palliate our miscarriages; but to warn and admonish us. I am not to say, when irritated into asperity, "Why, Paul and Barnabas were hot and fierce too;" but to reflect on the weakness of human nature, and to learn my own danger—"If such men erred, let me beware." "Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe." Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. Happy is the man that feareth always.

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## JULY 20.—MORNING.

"They departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark and sailed unto Cyprus; and Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God. And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches." ACTS xv. 39—41.

NOTHING could have been more unlikely or painful than this separation. Barnabas was of a most affectionate and tender disposition, and was called "the son of consolation." It was he that introduced Paul to the Christians at Jerusalem, and convinced them of his conversion when they were all afraid of him. They were peculiarly attached to each other. They had always been companions in travelling and preaching. How often had they taken sweet counsel together, and gone to the house of God in company! How frequently had they united in holy exercises! Like David and Jonathan, they were knit together in love, and seemed to have but one heart and one soul—Yet they differ, contend sharply, and part! Who has not said, in his haste, all men are liars! What

can equal the pain that results from the disruption of friendship!

Yet the Lord can make the wrath of man to praise him. The separation of Paul and Barnabas was overruled for good, and “turned out rather to the furtherance of the Gospel.” Two missions now issued forth instead of one.

For the breach between them did not take them off from their work, or relax their zeal in the noble cause to which they were pledged. Only it is observable, not only that they moved widely from each other, but that each repaired to his native country; Barnabas sailing for Cyprus, and Paul travelling through Syria and Cilicia. Were they, in taking these directions, guided by the Holy Ghost, or did they follow their own prudence and inclination? The latter might not have been inconsistent with the former. The Spirit of inspiration often availed itself of common occurrences, and fell in with the natural views and feelings of the individuals favoured with it. Partial affections are not incompatible with general benevolence; but may be the very means of aiding it. A peculiar regard for the land in which we were born and trained up, among all the endearments of life, is natural and unavoidable, and deserving of encouragement; and it is certain that we cannot shew our love to it in any way so nobly and importantly, as by endeavouring to promote the spread and success of the Gospel in it.

The manner in which they were dismissed to their new scenes of labour, reminds us of the practice and principles of the first Christians. They were men of prayer. They knew that our sufficiency for every trial and for every work was of God; yea, that even

an Apostle could only be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might—and therefore “the brethren recommended them unto the grace of God.”

But because this is spoken of Paul and Silas at their departure, and not also of Barnabas and John, some have inferred that the church at Antioch sided with Paul, thinking him in the right in this dispute, and blaming Barnabas for opposing him. But we are persuaded the sacred historian intended no such inference. Luke *mentions* only the dismission and recommendation of Paul, because it was *his* history he was engaged to write. But we have every reason to believe that they did the same for Barnabas when he left them, as they did for Paul. They would know that in every difference there is mutual, though there may not be equal blame. They would be alive to the excellences of both these men of God: they would be tender towards both; they would pray for both. They had perhaps endeavoured to be mediators, but they took care not to be partisans. There are cases in which neutrality is a virtue, and a man’s greatest wisdom and excellency is to do nothing. And it is a very unreasonable thing, when persons disagree, to think that others must be drawn into their quarrel; instead of retaining a regard for both, as far as each appears estimable. Let this remark be applied not only to religious dissensions, but to quarrels among neighbours. Let us remember the words of the wise man: “He that, passing by, meddleth with strife not belonging to him, is like a man that taketh a dog by the ears”—He will soon grow weary of holding him back, and if he lets him go, he will be better.

—Did Paul and Barnabas part at Antioch to meet

no more? We are not able to determine this. It appears, however, that if they did not meet again, they were reconciled; for some years after Paul thus speaks of him; “or I only and Barnabas, have not we power to forbear working?” Yea, we are persuaded they were reconciled before they parted. Anger may enter the mind of a wise man, but it “resteth only in the bosom of fools.” Paul, who said to others, “Let not the sun go down upon your wrath,” would not separate from Barnabas, perhaps for ever as to this life, without expressions of renewed attachment. And who, that ever tasted the pleasures of reconciliation, but wondered that he ever lived a day or an hour in the gall of bitterness and resentment?—Wherefore let us as much as possible live peaceably with all men. And if, as offences will come, a breach at any time is made, let us hasten to heal it, remembering that he who soonest yields is the conqueror, and that it is the glory of a man to pass by a transgression. “Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.”

## JULY 20.—EVENING.

“As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord.” *Ezek. i. 28.*

THERE is always ground for the Prophet’s complaint; “Seeing many things, they *observe not.*” How often do even objects, peculiarly designed and adapted to excite and impress, fail to strike; or at least, to

awaken any proper attention! This is the case with the rainbow. Children wonder at the novelty, grandeur, and construction of the figure, but seldom ask a question about it. The common people, who are much abroad in the field, rarely give it a gaze; and never connect a thought with it, but as it may be supposed, by the time of its exhibition, to intimate the state of the weather. And what does the philosopher? In the pride of science, he despises the vulgar; but, though able to explain the mediate cause of the phenomenon, he never looks after anything the Scripture says concerning it. But who is, not only a naturalist, but a moralist? And not only a moralist, but a Christian? A Christian in the field, as well as in the temple? making that which is seen and temporal, the means of communion with that which is unseen and eternal?

The rainbow may be viewed three ways. First. Physically. Thus it is, in the sky, a semicircle of various colours, which appears in showery weather. It is gendered by the sunbeams on a cloud. Where there is a moist and dark cloud opposite the orb of day, and disposed to receive and reflect his rays, the bow is seen; and never without this concurrence.

Secondly. Federally. The first time we read of it in the Book of Genesis is in this covenant relation. "I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth. And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud; and I will remember my covenant, which is between me and you, and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh." It was in being before. But now it was

made a divinely constituted sign, or token. Thus it should lead us to think of the holiness and justice of God, in the destruction of the old world: and also of his forbearance and goodness, in engaging not to destroy it in like manner again; and in affording a sensible assurance of it. The appearance may be, in some measure, viewed as even typical of the event. The bow was early the principal weapon of war; and soon became the emblem of it. David says, "He hath bent his bow, and made ready his arrows upon the string, to shoot at the persecutors." But here is a bow without arrows, and without a string! When a man uses the bow in a hostile manner, the ends are towards himself; and the back is towards the enemy. But here the bow is reversed—the back is towards heaven: and the ends towards the earth. And therefore, if it had arrows upon the string, they must be discharged upwards, not downwards—the earth is safe, and has nothing to fear from it. If this should be thought more curious than wise; yet the bow thus viewed, if not a type, is a proof and a pledge. It says, the Flood is gone—never to return! And here we feel a perfect certainty. However long or violently the rain falls, we are not alarmed. We look to the bow in the cloud; and are sure, that "while the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, shall not cease." And why do we not feel equally sure with regard to another interposition?

For thirdly. The bow is to be viewed evangelically. "For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee,

saih the Lord thy Redeemer. For this is as the waters of Noah unto me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed: but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee." Here we find God doing, in a nobler case, what he did after the deluge. Here we find him—with a better, an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure. And, to render the allusion similar, and to afford strong consolation to those who are fleeing for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before them, we have his oath, accompanied with a sign or token, that should subdue every apprehension. Where? What is it? "Upon the likeness of the throne," says Ezekiel, "was the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it." We know to whom this refers. "I saw as the colour of amber, as the appearance of fire round about within it, from the appearance of his loins even upward, and from the appearance of his loins even downward, I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and it had brightness round about. As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord."—An emblem of his glory, both as to his person and importance. Who can help admiring the rainbow? It is one of the most *beautiful* appearances in Nature. How various the colours! Yet the celestial tints are united; and, though distinct, melt into each other, to make one astonishing whole. And his Name is Wonderful.

What a combination of excellences is found in him!—“He is altogether lovely.” All human and divine beauties meet in him. All the charms of Nature, all the attractions of all creatures in earth and in heaven, are blended in him, and infinitely surpassed!—“For how great is *his* goodness! and how great is *his* beauty!”

It also reminds us of his importance. It insures us safety—covenant safety. We are justified by his blood, and saved from wrath through him. He is the hope—the consolation of Israel. He that believeth on him cannot perish; but hath everlasting life.

Let us look to him, and be comforted, against every adverse threatening. Afflictions cannot overwhelm us. The Law cannot curse us. Enemies cannot injure us. “Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

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“They took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.”  
ACTS iv. 18.

THIS recognition is explained in two ways. Some take it literally, as referring to the persons of the Apostles. These, their arraigners remembered, when they looked at them, for they had seen them before in company with him. And this, it is more than

probable, was the case. For some of this very council attended his examination on the night of his apprehension. Yea, he was examined in the very house of this Caiaphas; and we are assured, that Peter, on the occasion, went into the High Priest's palace to see the end. Jesus, also, had openly taught in the Temple, when, more than once, some of these men were present, disputing with him; and he was always accompanied by his disciples. No wonder, therefore, that Peter and John were recognised by them.

But others take it, in allusion to their qualities, behaviour, and mode of speaking; connecting it particularly with the former words. And "when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus: remarking that they were of the same party; or, as we should say, of the same stamp. So the sentence has been commonly understood. And three remarks may be made upon it.

First. Some have been with Jesus. Peter and John had been, as to his bodily presence, with him, for several years, in public, and in private; going out and coming in with him. And who is not ready to envy them such intercourse? But he was received up into glory; and they who had known him after the flesh, knew him so no more. Yet he had promised his people his spiritual presence to the end of the world. And thus, though now invisible, he is yet accessible. Hereafter they will be for ever with the Lord. But this heaven begins on earth. They were naturally without Christ; though not as to

dispensation, yet as to experience. But their religion began with an introduction to *him*. They were made sensible of their need of him. They sought him: they found him. They had much to do with him then; and they have had much to do with him ever since. And they only go on well in religion as they are able to say, "I am continually with thee." They are with *him*—in his word—in his house—at his table—with him in the closet—in the field—they are with him, as pupils are with their teacher—as servants are with their master, waiting upon him all the day—as followers with their leader, willing to follow him whithersoever he goeth—as soldiers with their commander; fighting the good fight of faith—For "they that be *with* him are called, and chosen, and faithful"—And "he that is not *with* him, is against him."

Secondly. It is expected that they who are with him should resemble him. It is proverbially said, Tell me a man's company, and I will tell you his character. And it is well known, that like not only attracts, but begets like. Hence the importance we attach to the choice of associates. Hence we say to the unmarried—Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers. Hence to the young—He that walketh with wise men shall be wise; but a companion of fools shall be destroyed. If we enter the house of mourning, we instantly catch the sympathy. The heart softens. The countenance contracts. The eye melts. How different are our sensations in the circles of festivity and mirth! It is said that those who live at court have a manner of their own, which others cannot successfully put on.

All association, however limited, produces some

influence. But the conformity will be in proportion—to the degree of the intimacy—and the constancy of the intercourse—and the love we have to the individual—and the veneration we feel for his greatness. Now all these will apply supremely to the Christian's acquaintance with Christ. And therefore the resemblance must be the greater—especially when we add to all this—that it is the duty, and the main business of his religion to imitate him—For he that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk as he walked. And if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

Thirdly. This conformity will not be overlooked. The Christian himself may not be sensible of it; for the more progress he makes in the Divine life, the more humble will he be. Moses was not aware of the brilliancy of his face when he came down from *being with God*; and was surprised to see the people dazzled at the glory of his countenance. And Paul said, I have not attained, I am not already perfect. But God will take knowledge of it. Angels will take knowledge of it. Ministers will take knowledge of it. His fellow Christians will take knowledge of it.—The world will take knowledge of it—his profiting will appear unto all men. And though the wicked cannot be pleased with it, yet they are aware of what, by their profession, Christians ought to be, and their consistency *will* enthrone them in their conviction, and put to silence their ignorance; and *may* constrain them to glorify God in the day of visitation.

If persons are seen firm in principle; fearless in duty; zealous in the cause of God; yet humble and lowly; and gentle and tender; and patient in suffer-

ing; and ready to forgive—no one need to be told with whom *they* have been.

So, if you are proud, and vain, and worldly-minded, and avaricious, and revengeful, and censorious, and unkind, we do not require you to tell us with whom *you* are most intimate. And though we do not believe in witchcraft, we know that you have a familiar spirit; and we know who, and what he is. “And glory not, and lie not, against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above; but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above, is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated; full of mercy and good fruits; without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.”

## JULY 21.—EVENING.

“O taste and see that the Lord is good.” Ps. xxxiv. 8.

THAT God is good is too obvious to be denied; though, alas! we are so little affected with it. He is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works. He openeth his hand, and satisfieth the desire of every living thing. As to *ourselves*, he made us. He placed us so high in the scale of beings. He furnished, for our reception, a world filled with his bounty and beauty. He gives the sweet interchange of hill and vale, and wood and lawn. He makes the outgoings of the morning and evening to rejoice; and, in the succession and produce of the seasons, he crowns the year with his

goodness. He not only provides for our support, but for our comfort. He not only feeds and clothes, but feasts and adorns us. All our senses might have been so many inlets of pain ; but they are the avenues of a thousand pleasures ; and we are furnished with the most delightful colours, and sounds, and relishes, and perfumes. Our food might have been rendered distasteful ; but he has made it pleasant : and connected gratification with the most necessary act of life. No one eats from a sense of duty, or to avoid death ; but for pleasure.

Distinguished from this general kindness of God there is, however, a peculiar goodness ; and which regards us, as *sinners*. It is called, in the Scriptures, mercy and grace. It led him to remember us in our low estate, and to make provision for our salvation from every effect of the Fall. He spared not his own Son. He delivered him for our offences, and raised him again for our justification. And in him all things are now ready for our acceptance. And in him, unworthy as we are, we may obtain all spiritual blessings in heavenly places, for ever. Herein is love ! And this favour which he bears unto his people, and which regards the soul and eternity ; this good will of Him that dwelt in the bush, is what we are supremely to seek after.

But what is the best way to know this goodness ? David does not say, Hear, and know ; read, and know ; believe, and know—but, *Taste and see* that the Lord is good. That is, apply to him for yourselves, instead of relying on the authority of others ; as in a case of disputed relish you determine not by testimony, but taste. In other words, it means experience. Experience is knowledge derived from experiment, in con-

tradistinction from theory. Since the mighty mind of Bacon beat down hypotheses, and introduced the inductive system, philosophy has reasoned from facts; and experimental philosophy has been much applauded. Why then should we ridicule experimental religion? Is there no standard in divinity to which we can appeal? Is there no test to be applied to the truth of pious pretensions? Are there no facts to bear out, or to contradict, what the Scripture says of sin? of repentance? of hope? of peace and joy in believing?

Some, and in our day many, know divine things in a way of speculation. But they are not under their operation: they feel not the powers of the world to come. And these are the most unlikely characters to be wrought upon. They are familiar with the truths of the Gospel; they admit all the preacher advances; they acknowledge all he proves: but it has no influence over the heart and life. They believe in hell: but make no attempt to flee from the wrath to come. They believe in heaven: but do not set their affections on things above. They believe in the value of the soul, and that its redemption ceaseth for ever: and yet neglect the only opportunity to embrace the things that belong to their peace. They go through the Bible; but its threatenings do not alarm, and its promises do not allure them. They resist every motive. They have been wooed and awed a thousand times in vain. They see and approve better things, and follow worse. They are not happy, and contrive not to be miserable. They are in the jaws of death, and yet are at ease in Zion—What paradoxes! What contradictions are you! Of what worth is *your* knowledge? To know a refuge, and

never enter it! To know a remedy, and never apply it! To know good, and never partake of it! This will not only leave you to perish, but deprive you of excuse; and aggravate your sin and condemnation. Like Uriah, with his fatal letter, you carry information that will place you in the front of the battle. Be not satisfied, therefore, till you know these things to purpose—which can only be by your knowing them experimentally.

Then your heart will be established in grace: and you will be so confirmed in the truth, that you will not be led away by the error of the wicked, to fall from your own steadfastness.

Then you will desire greater degrees of it; and, having tasted that the Lord is gracious, your prayers will be, “Lord, evermore give us this bread.”

Then you will be excited and qualified to address others. You will speak from the heart, and recommend a tried remedy—a remedy that has effectually cured yourselves. “Lo this, we have searched it, so it is: hear it, and know thou it for thy good.”

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## JULY 22.—MORNING.

“To him that overcometh.” Rv. iii. 21.

**THERE** are seven addresses of this kind, closing the seven epistles, which John was to write, and send to the churches which were in Asia: to Ephesus, and Smyrna, and Pergamos, and Thyatira, and Sardis, and Philadelphia, and Laodicea. Overlooking what is peculiar to each of them, let us notice what is common to all. Four things are so.

First. All of them regard a particular character.

It is a successful soldier—Him that *overcometh*. This reminds us of the nature of the Christian's life. It is a warfare. It was such, unquestionably, in the days of the Apostles. We read of their wrestling with principalities and powers: of their fighting the good fight of faith: of their resisting unto blood. If it be said, "The language is figurative," we allow it. Yet it must, or we are trifled with, imply realities—And what *are* these? If it be said, "Religion is not the same thing now as it was then," we ask, When was it changed? And by whom? And what is it *at present*? What would be thought of a preacher who should come forward in public, and say, A religious life *was* a difficult thing once: but it is a very easy one now? The first Christians were required, in order to be the disciples of Christ, to deny themselves, and take up their cross, and follow him in their generation: but all this is dispensed with now! He may prophesy falsely—and the people may love to have it so: but what will be done in the end thereof? If, therefore, you think yourselves in the way everlasting, without knowing any thing of this spiritual warfare, you are in a pitiable condition: and pertain to the strong man armed, who keeps *his* palace and goods in peace.

Secondly. All of them are attached to an individual—Not to *them* that conquer: but to—*him* that overcometh. As much as to say—Each is perceived by me in the crowd: and if all in the church should prove corrupt, and only one maintain his fidelity, faint, yet pursuing, let *him* not be ashamed or afraid. *He* shall be confessed before my Father and the holy angels. For *him* that honours me, I will honour.

Thirdly. All of them contain the *assurance of*

*some reward* of grace. Such is the fruit of Paradise—the hidden manna,—a crown of life—and the white stone—the morning star—white raiment—a pillar in the temple of God—a seat with the Saviour on his throne—But who can describe or comprehend these remunerations? They are yet to be revealed. But we know enough of them to animate us in the conflict; and to convince us that godliness is profitable unto all things.

Fourthly. All represent the *Lord Jesus as the Author and Bestower* of every honour and indulgence. I will make; I will give; I will grant—says *He* who procured all for us; and in whom all the fulness dwells. The joy set before him, for which he endured the Cross, and despised the shame, was the gratification of his benevolence, in receiving gifts for men. And he shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied. *He* saves them spiritually now. *He* shall raise up their bodies at the last day. And *He* shall say to those on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

*He* shall come to be glorified in his saints; and to be admired in all them that believe. Amen.

## JULY 22.—EVENING.

“Sanctify them through thy truth.” JOHN xvii. 17.

As the Saviour intercedes for this sanctification, it shews us the importance of it. As he asks it for his own disciples, who were already called by his grace, and had continued in his word, we learn that it is a progressive work, and that we should not be

satisfied with any present advancements we have made in it. Hence the admonition of the Apostle: "Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." God is the source and author of this sanctification; and therefore *his* agency is implored. But we are here reminded of the instrumentality he employs: "Sanctify them through *thy truth*." There is an emphasis in the appropriation—*thy truth*: for it is not every kind of truth that sanctifies; but the truth *of God*; "*the truth as it is in Jesus*." This is the means of our conversation; and therefore it is said, "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth." And this also is the means of our progress in the divine life; and hence we read, "As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." The Gospel conduces to our sanctification several ways:

First, by replenishing the soul with holy objects of contemplation. These, by filling the mind, keep out other things, and, by their residing in it, produce assimilation. For we are always affected with subjects with which we are constantly familiar. When we are among little children, and fields, and meadows, and lambs, we acquire feelings of simplicity and innocence, to which we are strangers in our intercourse with the world. A man that dwells much upon gloomy images is soon tinged with depression and despondency. The miser, by poring always on "sordid dust," becomes contracted, and mean, and base. Who does not feel his levities checked, and a soft sympathy seizing his frame, when he enters the house of mourning, and, for the time at least, know, that "by the sadness of the countenance the heart is

made better?" Ideas of grandeur tend to elevate, and of purity to refine our sentiments. Hence one of the secrets of sanctification is, to be very conversant with "the things of God," by reading, hearing, and reflection.

Secondly, by presenting powerful motives. And what motives does it not employ? It addresses our fear, and lays all hell before the conscience. It appeals to our hope, and tells us of the things which God has prepared for them that love him. It speaks to our ingenuousness and gratitude. If we sin, it is against our best Benefactor and Friend. If we offend and grieve him, it is in sight of his dying anguish. Can I hear him saying, *All this I freely endure for thee, and not cry, "Lord, I am thine, save me?"* "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"

Thirdly, by the Spirit of holiness that attends it. His influence is necessary to the success even of his own word. Without it, the suitableness and excellency of the means will be unavailing. The best objective representations and rational arguments will be counteracted by the depravity of the human heart, unless the Lord works with them. When the Apostles came to Antioch, "preaching the Lord Jesus," it was not the goodness of the subject that produced their success—"The hand of the Lord was with them;" and hence, "a great number believed and turned unto the Lord." And Paul acknowledges the same in his Epistle to the Thessalonians: "Our Gospel came to you, not in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." Now this influence is confined to God's truth. This testimony he only gives to the word of his grace. And therefore the Apostle asks the Galatians, "This only would

I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" So we may ask any believer who is a new creature in Christ, What is it that proved the power of God to your salvation? What was it that humbled you in the dust, and yet enabled you to rejoice in Christ? That at once relieved you under a sense of guilt, and yet rendered you the enemy of sin? That raised you above the world, and yet made you content and useful in it? Blessed are the people that know the joyful sound.

Let us hourly praise the Father of lights, that to us is the word of this salvation sent. There is no true sanctification separate from it. Men may be amiable, and civil, and moral, and superstitious, without it; but not holy. The truth and the life of God go together. We do not like a religion that rests in the word; and we suspect a religion that can dispense with it—"Sanctify them through thy truth."

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## JULY 23.—MORNING.

"For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee." Ps. lxxxvi. 5.

THE first word, "for," shews that the text contains a reason for something; and it was this—as we see by the preceding verse: "Unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul." We learn from it of what importance it is to place and keep the Supreme Being before the eye of the mind, in an amiable and inviting character, when we have to do with him. Tell me not, there is danger in such representations: they may

gender presumption. They may.—Every thing is liable to abuse. But we are saved by hope. By withdrawing his confidence in God, man fell: and he can only be restored by replacing it in him. The first step of a sinner in returning to God must result from this trust. Accordingly, the design of Revelation is to produce and support it. “For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.” The same is said of the mediation of Christ—“By him, we believe in God, who raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory, that our faith and hope might be in God.” More are destroyed by despair than by presumption. When once a man says there is no hope, he becomes abandoned; and the despondence he feels is the strongest link in the chain that binds him in an unconverted state. Let there be, therefore, always a refuge open, and into which a sinner, when he looks back and wishes to enter, may return. Tell him that yet there is room. Tell him that God is good; and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon him.

And, from hence, let me also learn, that—when we have no comfort arising from personal assurance, there is encouragement enough in the general views which the Scripture gives us of God to induce us to wait on the Lord, and keep his way. David does not, here, say, I will lift up my soul to Him, for he is *my* God, and he has given me the heritage of them that fear his Name; but he looks to his goodness, and readiness to forgive, and the plenteousness and impartiality of his mercy. These considerations do not require me to ascertain, before I come to him,

that I am a saint; but tell me to come, as a sinner; and assure me, that he will in no wise cast me out. When I know not that I *have* grace, how delightful is it to know that it is attainable; and to hear a voice, saying, Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely! Thus Mr. Scott said, when dying, that those Scriptures refreshed and comforted him most, which were not limited to a particular class, but open to all.

Yet, however good, and forgiving, and merciful, he is—this is nothing to those who refuse or neglect to “call upon him.” Such blessed assurances are not intended to make us careless; but to excite and animate our application to him. Prayer is the way in which he, who has a right to determine, and who cannot err, has chosen, for our obtaining his favours—Yet I will be inquired of. Ask, and ye shall have. Seek, and ye shall find.

Those, therefore, that live without prayer, are shut out from the blessedness. But this is not all. They incur, also, the curse which results from the contempt of his grace. There is no aggravation of misery like the consciousness of patience exhausted, kindness abused, opportunity lost. But lost entirely by our own fault! lost for ever! *This* conviction will be the food of the worm that never dies, and the fuel of the fire that never shall be quenched.

## JULY 23.—EVENING.

"In that day sing ye unto her, A vineyard of red wine. I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day." *ISAIAH xxvii. 2, 3.*

God has both enemies and friends in the world. Hence his word abounds with threatenings and with promises: for he will deal with the one according to their desert, and they will have no reason to complain; and with the other according to the riches of his mercy and grace, and they will have much reason to be thankful. "In that day the Lord with his sore, and great, and strong sword, shall punish leviathan the piercing serpent, even leviathan that crooked serpent; and he shall slay the dragon that is in the sea." But the dooming of the wicked need not alarm the Church: yea, destruction to the one is deliverance to the other—

Therefore it is added; "*In that day sing ye unto her.*" Thus we see that the Lord is concerned for the welfare and encouragement of his people: "*Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people.*" But knowledge must precede comfort. How can they rejoice in privileges or prospects of which they are ignorant? Hence "*it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace;*" that is, with the doctrine of the Gospel. They that *know* his Name will put their *trust* in him. Therefore it is said, "*Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem.*" And, here, "*Sing ye unto her.*" She is sometimes unable in a strange land to sing the Lord's song herself—Let others sing unto her—and as a babe is sung to sleep, let her fears, and cares, and griefs, be soothed away—Let ministers—

Let her fellow-members, cheer her—Let the public songs of Zion make her joyful in the Lord's house of prayer, that she may be filled with all joy and peace in believing.

Believing what? What she is—and what she may expect. First, what she *is*: “Sing ye unto her, A vineyard of red wine.” A vineyard is one of the most common figures by which the Church is held forth in the Scriptures; and it is easy, just, and striking. It is to intimate that they are severed from the world, and from a peculiar people. They are made to differ from others as wheat differs from tares, as flowers from noxious weeds, as a vineyard from a rude barren wilderness. A vineyard is private property; in which the owner delights, and from which he derives profit. And the Lord's portion is his people. He has chosen them for his own inheritance. He has set them apart as godly for himself. He takes pleasure in them; and derives his praise from them. He is glorified when they bear much fruit.

But they are a vineyard of “red wine.” That is, a vineyard whose vines yield the best fruit, and from which is extracted the richest juice, called in another place “the *pure blood* of the grape.” The people of God are always spoken of in language which marks their value. Every thing is not only peculiar, but superior. They are more excellent than their neighbours. Have they peace? It is a peace which passeth all understanding. Have they joy? It is joy unspeakable and full of glory. The religion of others is only the produce of nature; and that which is of the flesh is flesh. But the Lord's people are spiritual. They are partakers of God's holiness. They follow

the Lord fully. Their conversation is in heaven. Their speech drops as a honeycomb.

Secondly, what she may expect: "I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day." As the word feed, when applied to the Lord as a shepherd, intends not only his furnishing his sheep with food, but performing all the pastoral office; so *keeping* the vineyard here denotes all the work of the husbandman. Vines are very dependent growths; they require much attention. They must sometimes be pruned. The useless and injurious suckers which would draw off the sap from the bearing boughs must be lopped off. I one day saw the gardener at this work—he seemed to be very free with the knife—and, rather fearing for the vine, I inconsiderately said, "Are you not taking away too much?" "Sir," said he, "I know what I am doing." And recovering my confidence in him I left the execution to his own skill; and I had no reason to complain: the clusters justified him. Why do we not trust in the God of all grace? He does not afflict willingly, but for our profit. His work is perfect, his ways are judgment. But observe what he *here* engages to do. His vineyard needs refreshing, reviving, and increase. And he will "water it;" water it by his word, his ordinances, and his Spirit—and water it "every moment." No other vineyard needs this—but what would be the consequence if God was *ever* to withhold the influence of his grace from *us*? His vineyard is exposed; and to what purpose would the culture of it be, if the fences were broken down, and wild beasts of the desert could enter and devastate? But they have a vigilant and almighty Protector, who "lest any hurt it, will

keep it night and day." Keep it *constantly—night and day*. Keep it *completely*—lest any *hurt* it—not only lest any *destroy* it, but *injure* it! How well are they kept who are kept by the power of God!

What condescension and kindness are here!—That the *Lord* will do all this! Lord, what is man that *thou* shouldest magnify him—that *thou* shouldest set thine heart upon him!

Remember me, O Lord, with the favour thou bearest to thy people. "If I am a vine in thy vineyard, no one seems so low, so weak, so unfavourable, so unpromising, as I am. Return, I beseech thee, O God—Look down from heaven—and Behold and—Visit this vine."

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## JULY 24.—MORNING.

"Prove me now." MAL. iii. 10.

THERE is nothing of which men are more tenacious than the honour of their veracity. How offended do they feel, if we seem to suspect the truth of their word, by requiring a pledge or voucher, before we can venture upon it! If a king were to address his subjects in the way of privilege; and they should say, We must try thy faithfulness before we can trust it; he would consider himself insulted, and, in wrath, have nothing to do with them. God is veracity itself; and magnifies his word above all his Name. And he might justly say to us—Such are my declarations—dishonour me not, by requiring any confirmation—I am entitled to implicit credence—and if ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established.

But he knoweth our frame; and he knoweth the absolute importance of our confidence in him; and therefore he allows us to acquire it in our own way, and seems more concerned for our satisfaction, than for his own glory.

And yet hereby he glorifies himself too: for by this method he not only shews his kindness and condescension in accommodating himself to our infirmities; but obtains a sensible and satisfactory conviction in favour of his truth. In addition to testimony, we are furnished with experience. What we have read and heard, we have brought to trial, and have demonstrated ourselves. So that we do not merely believe. There must be, indeed, a degree of faith to induce us to make the trial; but when we have made it, and made it successfully, the proof increases the confidence of faith; and he that *thus* believeth hath the witness in himself.

Hence, when God invites us to prove him, it is not sinful to do it; yea, it would be sinful to refuse. We see this in the case of Ahaz. "Moreover the Lord spake again unto Ahaz, saying, Ask thee a sign of the Lord thy God: ask it either in the depth, or in the height above. But Ahaz said, I will not ask, neither will I tempt the Lord." He did not decline it from confidence in God, or from humility, but from desperation or indifference—"Not I—it is useless." Isaiah so understood it, as appears from his answer and complaint: "Hear ye now, O house of David; is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will ye weary my God also?" When He allows a privilege, it becomes us gratefully to use it: and we reflect upon his kindness and wisdom if we do not. Some, like Gallio, care for none of these things. They do not think reli-

gion or revelation worthy of proof. Hume said, he had never read through the New Testament in his life! As much as to say, It is nothing to me, whether these things be true or false. I will take no pains to ascertain whether we have souls, as well as bodies; whether another world succeeds this; and whether, after death, there be a judgment.

There is, indeed, a censurable proving of God; and it is more than once charged upon the Jews of old. It was founded in unbelief, and led them to dare his judgments. Thus Pharaoh, and thus Adam and Eve, tried his word, in his threatenings. This is always wrong. First, because, if the trial proves the denunciation true, the proof is useless: for it is derived from the infliction of the evil itself; and we are not convinced, but punished. Secondly, we cannot put the menaces of God to the test, but by criminal conduct. It is only by sinning that we *can* try whether what he has *threatened* against sin will be accomplished, as the practice is the condition on which the penalty is suspended. But it is otherwise with the promises of God: if we find them true, we are saved and happy: and we can only seek the proof of their truth, in what is good and improving; in praying; in obedience; in the use of all the means which God has ordained.

Let us then prove him—and see whether his word will come to pass or not. Let us prove him with regard to the freeness of his mercy. For he hath said, “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.” Let us prove him with regard to the efficacy of his grace. For he

hath said, "My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness." Let us prove him with regard to the care of his providence. For he hath said, "There is no want to them that fear him." "He careth for you." "The hairs of your head are all numbered." Let us prove him with regard to the advantage of benevolence. For he hath said, "God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his Name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister." Let us prove him with regard to the blessedness of his service. For he hath said, "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." "There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting."

By how many millions *has* all this been proved! His word is a tried word. And it has never failed in the trial. And never will fail.

Let us make the trial for ourselves, and set to our seal that God is true. Thus we shall become his witnesses to others, and be able to say, "O taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him."

## JULY 24.—EVENING.

"The Father loveth the Son." JOHN iii. 35.

This is obviously spoken in a way of emphasis and distinction. "God is love." We find in him a love of common beauty—This leads him to provide for us

as the creatures that he has made: for the eyes of all wait on him; he satisfieth the desire of every living thing. We find in him a love of benevolence, called in the Scripture mercy and grace—This regards us as fallen creatures; and appears in the provision he has made to relieve our guilt, misery, and helplessness. We see in him also a love of complacency—In this he respects us as renewed creatures. For complacency takes in approbation, and esteem, and delight: and this God can only feel towards the regenerate; for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness, and what communion has light with darkness? But the Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in them that hope in his mercy. And *they* stand in the same bond, and will share in the same condition, with the Saviour himself—They are “joint-heirs with Christ”—they “shall be glorified together.” And therefore, in his prayer for his followers, he says, “I have declared unto them thy Name, and will declare it, that the love which thou hast towards *me* may be in *them*.”

Yet though the love of the Father to his people be the same with the love he bears to his Son, it is the same in kind only, not in degree—He is “the first born among many brethren,” and “in all things he must have the pre-eminence.” There is therefore a peculiar significancy in the assertion; “The Father loveth the Son.” This love is founded on three things. First, likeness. A measure of this resemblance is found in all Christians. Hence they are said to be “renewed after the image of him that created them in righteousness and true holiness.” But the likeness is not complete. There are remains of depravity in all of them while they are here; and they acknowledge and mourn

over their deficiencies. But he was the image of the invisible God : the express image of his person. "In him was no sin." The prince of this world came, but found nothing in him to work upon. The stirring up of the water brought up no mire and dirt, because there was nothing but purity at the bottom.

Secondly, obedience. He was the ten commandments embodied, and alive, walking up and down the earth for three-and-thirty years—"I delight," said he, "to do thy will ; yea, thy law is within my heart." "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me." And as his obedience was cheerful, so it was unvarying. "He that sent me is with me : the Father hath not left me alone ; for I do always those things that please him." He relaxed not when the Divine pleasure required him to agonize in the garden, and die upon the cross. And therefore he said, as he was closely moving towards them, "That the world may know that I love the Father ; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence." He was sensible to the suffering ; but he turned not away his back : he said, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me :" but he prayed, "nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done." Well therefore could he say at last, "I have glorified thee on the earth, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do."

Thirdly, the devoting himself to die for the recovery of sinners. "As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father : and I lay down my life for the sheep. Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again." It was an offering and a sacrifice to God of a sweet-smelling savour. God has no pleasure in the

destruction of the wicked. He delighteth in mercy. He loves to see us relieving the needy, and visiting the fatherless and the widows in their affliction. He is still more pleased to see us reclaiming the vicious, and saving souls from death: and he tells us that they who turn many to righteousness shall shine like stars for ever and ever. How then did the father of mercies, the God of all grace, regard *him* who, self-moved, without our desert or desire, interposed to redeem a guilty world from the curse of the law; and gave himself a ransom for all! “The Father loveth the Son”—

—And can we want *proof* of this? What may we not bring forward as an evidence of it? Witness his expressions. At his transfiguration a voice came out of the cloud, saying, “This is my beloved Son; hear ye him.” At his baptism a voice from heaven said, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” Yea, ages before he said, by his holy prophet, “Behold my servant whom I uphold; mine elect in whom my soul delighteth.” Witness all the arrangements he made previously to his birth. All had a designed reference to him. If a succession of prophets was raised up, it was for his sake. “To him gave all the prophets witness;” and “the testimony of Jesus was the spirit of prophecy.” If an economy of numberless sacrifices and ceremonies was established, it was for his sake—every thing prefigured him: “the law was a shadow of good things to come, of which the body was Christ.” If revolutions convulsed the world or the Church, it was for his sake—“I will shake the heavens and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land, and I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come, and I will fill this

house with glory, saith the Lord." All the dispensations of providence and grace, like so many streams, flowed into this confluence, and made his appearance the fulness of time. Witness the supernatural attestations by which he was honoured. In his birth, in his life, in his death, in his resurrection, he "was approved of God by miracles, and wonders, and signs." Witness the intimate revelations made him, and by which, though he never learned letters, he surpassed all the human race, and had in him all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. "For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth: and he will shew him greater works than these, that ye may marvel." Witness God's appointment that all blessings should come to us through him, and that we should always implore them for his sake and in his name. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you." In your applications, remind him of me, and he will never deny you. "Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full." Witness the exaltations to which he has advanced him, and the treasures he has conferred upon him. He has "crowned him with glory and honour;" and "set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come. For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son, that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father

which hath sent him." "The Father loveth the Son, and hath given *all* things into his hand."

Let *us* then love him, and be followers of God as dear children. *He* cannot lead us astray; and we must walk in the light as *he* is in the light. How blind must we be, to see no comeliness or beauty in One whom *he* values infinitely more than the universe! How depraved must we be, to feel indifferent to a Being possessed of such greatness and goodness, and who has done and suffered so much for us! What wonder the Apostle should say, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maran-atha?" But if I loved him, should I not think of him? should I not speak of him? should I not love to hold communion with him? should I not love to please and serve him?

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## JULY 25.—MORNING.

"For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me: him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people." ACTS iii. 22, 23.

THERE was a remarkable resemblance between Moses and the Messiah, which it would be easy to trace. But the likeness here spoken of regards his office. Moses was a prophet; a peculiar prophet; a pre-eminent prophet. He introduced and established the whole of the Jewish dispensation with miracles, wonders, and signs. He was the mediator between God and the people. Other prophets received divine

communications through various mediums; but he received every thing from God immediately. "If there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream. My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house. With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the Lord shall he behold." But if "the Law was given by Moses, grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." Yea, in all things he has the pre-eminence. Moses was faithful as a servant; but Christ as a Son over his own house. The commission of Moses was confined to one nation; Christ is not only the glory of his people Israel, but a light to lighten the Gentiles—the light of the world.

Every office the Saviour sustains requires a corresponding disposition in them to whom he is sent. As he is a prophet, we are commanded "to hear him." It cannot mean, a mere hearing. Then many would be safe who are condemned already. But it includes our believing his instructions with a faith unfeigned, and our cordial submission to them; or, as the Apostle expresses it, our obeying from the heart the form of doctrine delivered us. Blessed are they that hear the word of God and "keep it." If he commands us to lay up treasure in heaven; and we mind earthly things: if he tells us to deny ourselves, and take up our cross and follow him; and we live to the lusts of men: if he says, Look unto me, and be ye saved; and we go about to establish our own righteousness: we do not hear him, but despise and reject him. He

that hath his commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth him ; and he it is that heareth him.

We are not only to hear him, but to hear him “in all things whatsoever he shall say unto us.” Some dislike the mysterious parts of Christianity. Some, the humiliating. Some, the practical. But the only inquiry of a true disciple is, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” He will not dictate; he will not object; he will not prefer one thing to another, but say, “I esteem all thy commandments concerning all things to be right, and I hate every false way.” The test of real obedience is to “do all things without murmurings and disputings.”

Notwithstanding our duty and our responsibility, it is here supposed that some “will not hear this Prophet.” This is a sad intimation; and we might wonder at the fact. But the depravity of human nature will account for it; and all history confirms it. Some ridicule and oppose. Many never attend the means of grace. Numbers have only a “form of godliness,” while they deny the power thereof.

And to what are they exposed? “It shall come to pass, that every soul that will not hear that Prophet shall be destroyed from among the people.” Mark the impartiality of the sentence—“every soul.” The refusers may be many; and they may differ from each other. But, though each may turn to his own way, all are going astray. There is only one path of life; but there are many avenues to death. And it matters not what our particular character is, whether profligate or formalist, Pharisee or hypocrite—*he* that believeth not shall be damned—and without holiness no man shall see the Lord.—See the nature of the doom —“shall be cut off.” This is not correction,

but excision. Not, however, annihilation: this would be a privilege. They shall seek death; but they shall not find it. In vain will they ask the rocks to fall on them, and the mountains to cover them. The penalty is not the loss of their being, but of their happiness and of their hope; the destruction of body and soul in hell for ever.—Observe the dreadfulness of the aggravation—"from among the people." They are intermixed now; and some of them very peculiarly. They attend in the same sanctuary; they live under the same roof; they are united by the ties of friendship and of blood. But their privileged situation and condition only evinced and increased their depravity. "Let favour be shewed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness; in the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly; and will not behold the majesty of the Lord." Their present advantages, therefore, will afford them no security. Neither will they be able to *retain* them. The wicked shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. But, severed from the just, they will be led forth with the workers of iniquity; and carry away with them into the place of torment only the remembrance and the guilt of all they neglected and abused here.

"See, then, that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, how much more shall not we escape, if WE TURN AWAY FROM HIM THAT SPEAKETH FROM HEAVEN!"

## JULY 25.—EVENING.

"He exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord." ACTS xi. 23.

THOUGH Barnabas was the son of consolation, he aimed not only to comfort his hearers, but could say, "I beseech you, brethren, suffer the word of exhortation." He had seen the grace of God in the Christians at Antioch, and was glad. But he knew that it was not enough to begin well. The end proves and crowns all: he only that endureth to the end the same shall be saved. But if any draw back, the God of love shall have no pleasure in him. He believeth in the stability of the everlasting covenant, and was confident that he who had begun a good work in them would perform it until the day of Jesus Christ; but he knew how to apply his own principles. He knew that the appointment of the end insured the use of the means, and as much precluded a diversion from the one as the failure of the other. He knew also that those who cannot apostatize may backslide. On every ground he knew warnings and admonitions to be proper, useful, and necessary; and therefore he exhorted them—

Observe the aim of the exhortation—He exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord. With the first preachers of the Gospel He was all in all; and the subject of all their practical addresses therefore was, "As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so continue to walk in him." "Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of faith." They knew that he alone was equal to all their exigencies, and that their religion prospered only

as they maintained an habitual and supreme regard to him. Had we heard Barnabas explaining his admonition, we should have found him urging the brethren to adhere to him—as their teacher, who should lead them into all truth; as their Saviour, whose blood cleansed them from all sin, and whose righteousness justified them before God, and gave them access with confidence; as their helper in every duty and conflict, without whom they could do nothing, and through whose strength they could do all things; as their comforter, the consolation of Israel, the man who is the peace when the Assyrian cometh into the land; as their example, whose life was to be made manifest in their mortal bodies; and as their master, who had every claim upon them, having bought them with a price, and rescued them from their enemies, and to whom as their rightful owner they had given themselves, body, soul, and spirit.

Observe the nature of the exhortation—He exhorted them all that *with purpose of heart* they would cleave unto the Lord. Religion is a poor business unless the heart be in it. God therefore demands it: *My son, give me thine heart.* If this be not given, nothing else will be given, unless reluctantly, and therefore unacceptably. But every thing will follow the heart; and where there is first a willing mind, and a concern to please, imperfections in the manner will be overlooked in the motive; and if the deed be hindered, it will be accepted according to what a man hath, and not according to what he hath not. Yet there is much truth in the proverb, *Where there is a will there is a way.* Nothing often is wanting as to efficiency but resolution; and a fulness of resolution is most likely to arise from a fulness of inclination.

Love gives ardour and boldness; love is strong as death; many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it. While the slothful sees thorns; and the coward cries, There is a lion in the way, I shall be slain in the streets; purpose of heart, founded not in our own strength, but in the strength of the Lord (and in a Christian it is always so founded), clears away difficulties, or is roused by them into greater vigour and strenuousness.

Observe also the extent of the exhortation—He exhorted them *all* that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord—Not only the young, but the old; not only those who were just entering a religious course, but those who had been walking in it: not only the weak and the wavering in the faith, but the strong and established. Who is secure from temptation? Who is entitled to live without caution? None must put off his armour till he has quitted the field. If *any* one thinks the admonition unnecessary with regard to him, *he* is the individual who wants it most. A haughty spirit goes before a fall. Be not highminded, but fear.

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"The kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field." MATT. xiii. 44.

How well may the Saviour call the Gospel a treasure! The tongue of an angel could not describe its value and preciousness. It meets and relieves every want of the soul. It blesses us with all spiritual blessings. It is the true riches. Unsearchable riches.

Durable riches. It profits in the day of wrath. It delivers from death. It ennobles in the world to come.

A man may *find* a treasure hid in a field by accident, or by search. There is nothing casual in the salvation of a sinner, as to God: but as to *himself*, the event may be wholly undesigned and unlooked-for. He may have been seeking, but not for *this* object: Saul was searching when Samuel met him; but it was for his father's asses, and not for the kingdom. Thus the Lord is found of them that sought *him* not; and asked not for him. Matthew was sitting at the receipt of custom when the Saviour said, Follow me. Saul was in a journey of iniquity when the Saviour appeared to him in the way, and called him by his grace. Some have gone to the house of God, from mere custom and curiosity, or a design to ridicule; but have returned to pray, and have said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? But, says Henry, Though he is sometimes found of them that seek him not, he is always found of them that seek him. This was the case with Cornelius. He was a devout man, and feared God, with all his house; praying and giving alms always; when Peter was sent to tell him words by which he was to be saved. Nathanael had retired beneath the fig-tree to read, and reflect, and pray, when the Saviour took knowledge of him, and said, Thou shalt see greater things than these. And there are those now, who are awakened, rather than enlightened: they feel their spiritual wants, and are using the means of grace. And whatever ignorance or legality mixes with their efforts, they are in the search; and they shall find. He who has touched the heart, and turned it from the world, will fulfil the

desire of them that fear him; he also will hear their cry, and will save them. Then *shall* we know, if we follow on to know the Lord.

The *emotions* of the finder are naturally portrayed. First, when he hath found the treasure, he hideth it. When we are anxious to secure a thing, we conceal it. The way, therefore, is here used for the end; and hiding refers not to secrecy, but safety. The allusion is to that holy jealousy recommended by the Apostle, when he says, Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of us should seem to come short of it: looking diligently, lest any man fail of the grace of God. To that trembling at God's word, when we are more affected with the inviting than with the awful parts. To that solicitude to obtain, which always genders apprehension. Oh! how shall I make all this my own? Oh! if I should miss it! What must I do to be saved?

Secondly. He feels joy thereof. Not that firm and glorious joy which arises in the established Christian, from a consciousness of possession, and who can say, I know that my Redeemer liveth: but the joy that results from the discovery of the reality, the excellency, the suitableness, the all-sufficiency, the attainableness, of the blessing; and is called, Rejoicing in hope. The patient, while the disease yet oppresses him, cannot feel at ease; but he is gladdened when he hears of the arrival of a physician, bringing with him a remedy that was never applied in vain.

Thirdly. He goeth—for now it is impossible for him, like many, to sit still—and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth the field. That is, he is fully determined to submit to the cost of procuring it, what

ever it may be. We can offer no equivalency for the possession: nor is this the meaning of the word. In *this* way, were we to buy, it would not be without money, and without price. But the meaning is simply *exchange*; as, in buying, we part with something to gain something. Hereby we shew our estimation; for what stronger proof can we give of our valuation of an object than parting with all we have for the sake of it?

And the case here is such, that we *must* make a choice, and a sacrifice, to evince our preference, and attain our desire. Some things must be absolutely given up. Some conditionally. And all, as to supreme regard and dependence. Are we willing, then, to part with our sins? All our sins? Even our bosom lusts? The right hand? The right eye?—Are we willing to part with our own wisdom? not leaning to our own understanding, but receiving the kingdom of God as little children, and becoming fools that we may be wise?—Are we willing to part with self-righteousness? not with the practice of obedience, morality, and good works; but only the substitution of them in the room of the Saviour; and reliance on them for our acceptance before God; and the pleading of them as a title to heaven—instead of saying, In the Lord have I righteousness and strength.—Are we willing to part with the world? The promises of superiors? The applause of companions? The smiles of friends? The ties of the dearest relations? For “he that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me.”

This is a hard saying. But every thing requires sacrifice, and every thing in proportion to the importance of the attainment. And, here, the prize is

infinite. And we are more than indemnified for all we suffer or lose. "Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting."

## JULY 26.—EVENING.

"God is glorified in him." JOHN xiii. 31.

To glorify is taken two ways in the Scripture. It sometimes signifies to confer glory on a being destitute of it before—In this sense God glorifies us. At other times it intends acknowledging or displaying the glory of one already possessed of it—and thus we are said to glorify God. And there is no other way in which he can be glorified. As to his essential excellency, it admits of no addition, being infinite: but it allows of manifestation.

And thus the heavens declare the glory of God; and all his works praise him. But he has magnified his word above all his Name; and of the work of creation compared with the work of redemption we may say, "even that which was made glorious hath no glory by reason of the glory that excelleth." In every Christian God is glorified, both passively and actively. He even calls his people his glory: "I have placed salvation in Zion for Israel my glory." But the light of the knowledge of his glory is chiefly seen in the face of Jesus Christ. There we behold the brightness of his glory—the express image of his person. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the

Father, he hath declared him." And how has he declared him? Not only by his character, and life, and teaching, and doctrine, but especially in his sufferings and death; and in them not only by the graces which they displayed, but the principles they implied, and the purposes they accomplished.

To these He refers: and therefore in his last prayer he said, "I have glorified thee on the earth, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do;" thus intimating the connexion there was between these, and shewing that the one resulted from the other—he glorified God by the work he accomplished when he expired on the cross. And truly never was the glory of God so displayed as in this event: and therefore it was typified from the foundation of the world; and therefore the whole Gospel is called the preaching of the cross; and therefore an ordinance is established to shew it forth; and therefore the praises of the heavenly state regard the Lamb as worthy because he was slain; and therefore the angels desire to look into these things, as discovering more of the perfections of Deity than is to be seen in nature or providence. The law of God was more magnified and made honourable in the precept and penalty by his obedience and sacrifice, than it would have been by the obedience of all mankind had they never sinned, and by their sufferings had they all perished. What a display of his wisdom was here! Think of the difficulties to be overcome! The oppositions to be harmonized! The immense interests to be secured! Well does the Apostle speak of the manifold wisdom of God; and of his abounding towards us in all wisdom and prudence. What a display have we here of his holiness and justice!

Without shedding of blood there could be no remission. Rather than that sin should go unpunished, he required a surety, and was pleased to bruise him, and put him to grief, and make his soul an offering for sin; thus declaring his righteousness, that he might be just, and the Justifier of the ungodly that believeth in Jesus. What a display have we here of his power, in preparing a body for him, in raising him up from the grave, and giving him glory; and in the renovation and resurrection of all his followers! Paul therefore prays that we may know "what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the Church." What a display have we here of his truth and faithfulness, in fulfilling the assurance given in paradise four thousand years before, and bringing forth the seed of the woman according to the time, the place, the nation, the tribe, the family, the individual, foretold! This is the theme of Zechariah's song; "He hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David; as he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began: to perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant; the oath which he sware to our Father Abraham." But, above all, "herein is love." Here "God hath commended his love towards us, in that while we

were yet sinners Christ died for us." Every view of this dispensation shews the exceeding riches of his grace, and justifies the all-encouraging conclusion; "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" Here I see that love is not only his attribute—but his character—his nature. "God is love."

What wonder the Christian should say, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ?" He not only derives relief from it, but delight. Oh! how is he sometimes carried away in his contemplations, till he is enraptured and inspired with the subject, even in this vale of tears, and in this body of death! What will be his views of it, when that which is perfect shall come, and that which is in part shall be done away!

"For ever his dear sacred Name  
Shall dwell upon our tongue;  
And Jesus and Salvation be  
The close of every song."

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WHAT is this state? And what is this standing? The state is a state of *grace*; and means, the privileged condition in which all Christians are found, though they were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. It is expressed by our Apostle in the preceding words: Being justified by faith, we have peace

with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ : by whom also we have access by faith into *this* grace.

It may well be called—this grace ; for it only flows from, and only proclaims, the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness towards us, by Christ Jesus. How dreadful is it to have God for our adversary !—He, in whom we live !—He, who is about our path, and our lying down !—He, on whose side all creatures rise up, and arrange themselves ! He, whose look is death, and whose frown is hell ! What were our alarms when we began to discover our danger ; and conscience induced us to cry, “What must I do to be saved ?” And when we saw the storm passing off ; when we were told that the dreadful breach was made up ; when we believed that God was pacified towards us for all that we had done—what were our feelings then—but life from the dead ? And in that day we said, “O Lord, I will praise thee : though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me.”

But we may be reconciled to another, so as to be forgiven, and not be admitted into the intimacies of friendship. After Absalom was, through the intercession of Joab, allowed to return to Jerusalem, two years elapsed before he was allowed to see the king’s face. But God favours us with the most familiar intercourse and communion. We come boldly to the throne of grace. In every thing, by prayer and supplication, we make known our requests. We dwell in his house. We eat at his table. We walk with God. We lean on his arm, and on his bosom. He honours us with his confidence, and trusts us with his secrets. He allows us to put him in remembrance, and plead with him, and say—can his condonement go further ?

—“Concerning the work of my hands, command ye me.”

This grace means, also, approbation and complacency. He takes pleasure in them that fear him. He rests in his love. He joys over them with singing. They are his children, his bride, his jewels, his glory. And as their persons, so their services are accepted in the Beloved. Poor as they are, he smiles upon them. Their prayer is his delight; their alms are the odour of a sweet smell. He views their motive, and passes by their mistakes. He regards their wishes and design; and says, in their failures, “It is well that it was in thy heart.”

Hence follows sympathy and compassion. What is done to them he resents as a personal injury: for he that toucheth them toucheth the apple of his eye. In all their affliction he is afflicted. Though he corrects them, it is for their profit. He takes the rod with reluctance, and he lays it aside with pleasure. He cannot withstand their yielding and their tears. Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child? For since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still.

In *this* grace they *stand*. Standing, here, intends firmness, stability, permanence. It is sometimes opposed to condemnation—if thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquity, O Lord, who shall *stand*? To which we may answer, No one that appeals to his own obedience; but every one that is found in Christ. There is no condemnation to them that are in him. For *who* is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again; who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.—Sometimes it is also opposed to defeat. Take to you

the whole armour of God—that ye may *stand* in the evil day; and having done all, may *stand*. And of this they may be assured; for whatever disproportion there is between them and their enemies, the *worm* Jacob shall thresh the *mountains*. Some warriors have barely overcome; such another victory as they gained would have almost ruined them; but a Christian, having vanquished all his adversaries, stands with his feet on their necks; and is ready to engage as many more—Yea, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us.

The more privileged any condition is, the more anxieties does it awaken. It is easy, therefore, to imagine what a Christian must feel if he apprehended any uncertainty as to the state he is in. But that state is as safe as it is blessed. Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate him from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

“Arise, my soul, my joyful powers,  
And triumph in my God :  
Awake, my voice, and loud proclaim  
His glorious grace abroad.

“He raised me from the deeps of sin,  
The gates of gaping hell ;  
And fix'd my standing more secure  
Than 't was before I fell.”

JULY 27.—EVENING.

"Thou shalt have treasure in heaven." MARK x. 21.

WE shall not enlarge on the excellency and security of such treasure; but only inquire what is our relation to it, and whether this assurance can be claimed by us. Now there are four classes of persons, under which every individual before God may be comprehended.

There are some who have no treasure either in heaven or earth. They are spiritually and corporeally poor: poor for eternity, and poor for time: in this world they have only a vale of tears; and in another, "lamentation, and mourning, and woe." You cannot suppose, unless you imagine the preacher a barbarian, that he can say this without feeling. But he may feel, and yet be faithful; and how indeed could he express his concern for your welfare if he were to allow you to remain under a delusion the most dangerous? You think perhaps that your hardships and trials will recommend you to God; and you are often heard to say, "It is better to suffer here than hereafter." But you will suffer in both if you reject the counsel of God against yourselves, and adjudge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life. Christianity has indeed a most tender and a peculiar aspect towards the sons and daughters of want and woe—"The poor have the Gospel preached unto them." But you must receive it in order to be benefited by it. Then indeed your privations will be sanctified; the Lord will bless your bread and your water; and your humble dwelling will become one of the palaces of Zion.

There are some who have treasure on earth, but not in heaven. We inquire not how you obtained it. We will presume that the acquisition has left no stain upon your character, or sting in your conscience; and that you remember the Lord your God, that he it is that giveth you power to get wealth. Neither do we wish to depreciate the common bounties of his hand, as if they were not good in themselves, though so often abused. Some purposes they can answer; but it is not true without restriction that "money procureth all things." It cannot purchase health, or bribe off disease. Riches profit not in the day of wrath. They cannot purify the passions, or heal a wounded spirit. "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." Yea, it renders him more responsible; excites envy and opposition; exposes him to temptations and many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. "The love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." I pity the man of the world who has his portion in this life, and no interest in a better. He is daily and hourly leaving behind him all he loves and idolizes, while he has nothing before him to excite hope or desire; what wonder therefore that his death is the effect of reluctance and compulsion? "He shall be driven from light into darkness, and chased out of this world." The rabbinical Jews say that some of the words of Scripture with which the angels receive the soul at death, and sing it down to hell, are these: "Lo, this is the man that made not God his strength; but trusted in the abundance of his riches, and strengthened himself in

his wickedness." We have no notion that these benevolent beings derive pleasure from the misery of any one, or that they would insult even a lost spirit. But every one at death will be clothed with shame who has preferred the mammon of unrighteousness to the true riches.

There are some who have treasure in heaven, but not on earth. This is the case with not a few of our Lord's followers: "I will leave in the midst of thee a poor and an afflicted people." Silver and gold they have none. And they need not despair or murmur, as if all importance, excellency, usefulness, and enjoyment, were denied them with wealth. The Apostles themselves could say; "Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place." Even Jesus the Lord of all had not where to lay his head; and received the ministrations of widows. You have the honour of resembling the Saviour in condition, and the advantage of living more immediately by faith upon his providence, while he gives you day by day your daily bread. He also says to you, as he did to the Church of Smyrna, "I know thy poverty: but thou art rich." Rich in faith and hope: rich in the exceeding great and precious promises: rich in the earnest and foretastes of life eternal. Angels are your attendants; you feed on the hidden manna; he has covered you with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels. And as far as they can subserve your welfare, all things are yours: "Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's."

But there are some who have treasure in heaven and on earth too. The lines have fallen to them in pleasant places: they have a goodly heritage. The streams of the upper and of the nether springs flow within their borders. Is it nothing that you have not only the necessaries, but the conveniences, comforts, and indulgences of life? Is it nothing that you can largely enjoy the pleasures of benevolence? That you can draw down upon you the blessing of him that is ready to perish? That you can make the widow's heart to sing for joy? That you can aid in diffusing the Scriptures? in sending abroad the Gospel? and in every good work? Fall upon your knees, and thank the Giver of all good for the blessings of the life that now is. And then thank him far more that he has not put you off with these; or suffered you to be satisfied in them—"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead; to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you."

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## JULY 28.—MORNING.

"Let the heart of them rejoice that seek the Lord."

1 CHRON. xvi. 10.

—AND yet many believe, or pretend to believe, that religion is a joyless thing!

The *heart* has very little, if any, share in other enjoyments. Those delights only gratify the appetites, and strike the senses, and charm the imagination.

But where is the heart? Even in laughter the *heart* is sorrowful; and the end of that mirth is heaviness. In religion, the heart finds relief, repose, satisfaction, joy.

"Yes, the heart of those who are fully assured of their condition; who have already attained, or have far advanced in the divine life." Nay—says the prophet, Let the heart of them rejoice that *seek* the Lord. And there are three reasons to authorize it.

First. Because it is an evidence of grace. They may draw a conclusion against themselves, and refuse to be comforted; but no man can seek to know and enjoy, and serve and resemble God from mere nature. Actions may not indicate the state of the mind; but desires spring from it. We may be forced to do; but we cannot be compelled to prefer, and to choose.

Secondly. Because their success is sure. This is the case in no other pursuit. In the fields of worldly labour, we may spend our strength for nought, and in vain. A rival may bear off from us a prize which we have long been chasing, and at the very moment we are seizing it. The cup of enjoyment, filled with eager hope, is often dashed to the ground from the very lip that touches it. But their heart *shall* live that seek God. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall *doubtless* return again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him. Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled. Is there unfaithfulness with God? Did he ever say to the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me, in vain?

Thirdly. Because, when they *have* found, their aim and their wish in seeking are fully answered. All they can desire is treasured up in him: and they th . t

seek the Lord shall not want *any* good thing. As to success in other cases, the wise man tells us, all is vanity, and vexation of spirit: vexation, if we lose; and vanity, if we gain. To one of these alternatives we are inevitably subjected. We must be disappointed either in acquiring them—and this is often the case; or in possessing them—and this is always the case.

"In vain we seek a heaven below the sky.  
The world has false, but flattering charms :  
Its distant joys shew big in our esteem,  
But lessen still as they draw near the eye :  
In our embrace the visions die ;  
And when we grasp the airy forms,  
We lose the pleasing dream."

But while every thing earthly falls short of hope, it is not possible to form an expectation adequate to the riches of the glory of the inheritance in the saints. What is it to have God himself for our portion and exceeding joy! To be blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ! To realize a happiness that solitude increases, that trouble improves, that death perfects! As it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.

While thus the heart of them that seek him should rejoice, the heart of others should be induced to seek him. At present, he is not far from any one of you. He is even inviting you to seek him. Yet a little while, and it will be too late. Therefore, seek ye the Lord while he may be found; and call ye upon him while he is near.

## JULY 28.—EVENING.

"For now shall he be great unto the ends of the earth."

MICAH v. 4.

THIS certainly refers to the Messiah, the Lord of glory, the Lord of all. He is always great in himself: and therefore is not aggrandized by accession, but by discovery. He must be known, and he only needs to be known, in order to be great. A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and among his own kindred. Upon the same principle it has been said that domestic greatness is unattainable. All feel a decrease of veneration, if not of love, from acquaintance and intimacy. But the more he is known the more will he be admired and adored. The reason is, because he is *perfect*, and *divine*. His excellences therefore are unbounded and infinite, and will admit of endless attention and praise.

This subject deeply concerns his people. They know the importance of the revelation of the Lord Jesus to their perishing fellow-creatures. It is by his knowledge that he is to justify many. They are justified indeed by faith: but how can they believe on him of whom they have not heard? Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. Their benevolence therefore leads them to pray that his way may be known on earth, his saving health among all nations. His people also love him supremely; and love delights in the glory of its object. When they consider what he is, and what he has done and suffered, every impulse of their heart cries, "Let the whole earth be filled with his glory."

What affects them is not that they are or little

known or noticed—for what are they? but that *He* is so unknown, and neglected, and despised. He is great indeed already in the views and esteem of some, and they hope the number is increasing; but his admirers have been always few, compared with the multitude, and they are so still. Thousands and millions have never yet heard of him. Down to this hour, even where his religion is professed, the majority in no one country or village has been actuated by the true spirit of Christianity. At the thought of this two things comfort them. First, that it is not so in another world *now*. There he attracts every eye, and employs every tongue. A multitude which no man can number of glorified saints, and ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of angels, are continually saying, with a loud voice, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.”

Secondly, that it will not be so in this world *always*. For it is written, and the Scripture cannot be broken, that “from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same, his Name shall be great among the Gentiles, and in every place incense shall be offered unto him, and a pure offering.” Then the *nations* of them that are saved shall walk in the light of the Lamb—He shall sprinkle *many* nations—Yea, *all* nations shall fall down before him, and all kings shall serve him. O blessed day, when there shall be a godly prince on every throne, a godly judge on every bench, a godly pastor in every pulpit, a godly master in every family—when every author will write, and every merchant trade for him—when the melody of his praise shall soften the labourer’s toil, and the poor of the people shall

trust in him! O glorious hour, when it shall be said, without a figure, "Behold, the world is gone away after him!"

But who shall live when God doeth this! We often now exclaim, "Why are his chariot wheels so long in coming? Why does the whole creation groan and travail in pain together until now?" How many are there waiting for an event that will loosen the last cord of life, and lead them to exult, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people!" Yet the morning is spread upon the mountains. The day has dawned. Numberless agencies are in action, which, by the ordinary blessing of God upon them, must produce mighty results.

But who shall live when God doeth this! It is probable, even if he cut short his work in righteousness, that the clods of the valley will be sweet about many of us. Yet we shall die in faith, fully assured that he who died on the cross shall see his seed, and prolong his days, and that the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hands. Perhaps we shall be permitted to look down, and see his spreading greatness. If not, we shall be acquainted with the beatifying fact. We shall be where the acclamation will commence which will be re-echoed back from earth: "Hallelujah! for the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever."

## JULY 29.—MORNING.

"To whom he shewed himself alive after his passion." *Acts i. 3.*

How much will eternity reveal to our astonished minds! and, in reference to a thousand things, we may safely follow the advice of the poet—

"Wait the great teacher, Death; and God adore."

The Scripture is given to establish our faith, and comfort our hearts, and sanctify our lives; but not to amuse us, and to gratify our curiosity.—Our Saviour rose from the dead, and ascended into heaven: but between these events there elapsed a considerable portion of time. During these intervening weeks, where was he? And how employed? One thing only we know—that he frequently shewed himself to his disciples.

But what purposes were these intermediate appearances intended to answer? The Lord does not always give an account of any of his matters; and we ought to be peculiarly cautious in assigning reasons for *his* conduct who says, "My ways are not your ways, and my thoughts are not your thoughts." We cannot, however, err in remarking,

—That they were the accomplishment of his word. He had said, "Ye now have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your hearts shall rejoice; and your joy no man taketh from you." "I will not leave you comfortless, I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me." Now though these declarations extend to his final coming to judgment, and his advent in the gifts and graces of the Holy Ghost; yet they more immediately

insure his manifestation of himself between his resurrection and his glory. And if the disciples understood it not at the time, the meaning would be explained by the verification. And they would see how well they might in every other case rely upon his promise.

—They were also to convince them how fully he had forgiven them, and thus to gain the confidence of their hearts. For they had behaved very unworthily. After all he had done for them, and their own professions of attachment, when the hour of trial came, they all forsook him and fled. How much he felt their defection, we learn from his complaint; “I looked for some to take pity, and there was none; and for comforter, and I found none.” And their own consciences upbraided and condemned them for their vileness. And therefore had he gone away to heaven, and they had not seen him, they would have feared his resentment and displeasure. But he appeared to them again and again; and always with kindness in his looks, and peace on his lips; and at last, laying his hands on them, he was taken up to heaven in the very act of blessing them—thus telling them that he had the same heart as ever, and was more than pacified towards them after all that they had done.

—They were also to evince the certainty of his resurrection. The importance of this event rendered it necessary that it should be placed beyond the possibility of all reasonable doubt. The disciples were not eagerly credulous of the fact, but slow of heart to believe; and their diffidence has been overruled to confirm our faith. For they required and obtained every kind and degree of proof. And these

deponents were many. And were eye and ear witnesses. And even handled the Word of Life. And did eat and drink with him. And for a length of time. And in cases of a most peculiar nature. *They* could not, therefore, be mistaken: and *we* cannot be deceived. He is risen indeed! And therefore he is the Son of God. And we are not in our sins. The dead in Christ are not perished. And because he lives, we shall live also.

—They were also to impart information on subjects not touched, or only hinted at, before; because the disciples were not able to bear them; and the proper hour was not yet come. And therefore the sacred historian says, that he not only shewed himself alive after his passion, by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, but also *spake* to them of things pertaining to the kingdom of God. And this led them to think so differently of this kingdom from what they had done before, and to wait by prayer for its coming, in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

But when he said, I am no more in this world: and, also, Lo! I am with you always, even unto the end of the world: and when he said, “He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him”—surely he intended a manifestation beyond his appearance between his grave and his glory. And this we ourselves may hope to claim. But how is it that he will manifest himself unto us, and not unto the world? We disclaim all pretensions to personal manifestations. Some have contended for these; and, like Colonel Gardiner, have

believed that they corporeally saw him. But surely this was mistaking a lively impression on the mind for a reality. The case speaks for itself. Being embodied, he *could* render himself visible: but then it would be a true representation; we should see him as he *is*. And, accordingly, Saul saw him, when he appeared to him in his way to Damascus, with a body glorious above the brightness of the sun. But these good people always see him as he is not—they always see him bleeding on the cross—but he is not there—he dieth no more, death hath no more dominion over him. We need no sensible appearance.

But there is a spiritual manifestation absolutely necessary. Paul experienced this; or the outward vision would have been of little avail: “It pleased God,” says he, “to reveal his Son in me.” And our Saviour himself said, He that seeth the Son, and believeth on him, hath everlasting life. It is a perception, by faith, of his glory, so as to induce us to love him, and trust in him, and follow him.

—There are also special manifestations of himself (we mean, as to clearness and enjoyment) occasionally experienced by his people; and which excite them to exclaim, “This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.” These are not their food, but cordials. They are regulated by their condition and exigencies. But though they are limited, as to number and degree, they are most desirable and valuable. They make us better acquainted with heaven than all the descriptions contained in sermons and books. And they make us long after a state, in which his servants shall serve him; and they shall see his face—“And so shall they be for ever with the Lord.”

## JULY 29.—EVENING.

"Receive with meekness the ingrafted word." JAMES i. 21

NOTHING is spoken of in the Scripture more commonly or with more commendation than meekness. It is often made the subject of promise. We read, "The meek will he guide in judgment: The meek will he teach his way;" "He will beautify the meek with salvation;" "The meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace." It is also frequently enjoined in a way of duty. Indeed it would seem that no part of our Christian calling can be perfectly or properly discharged without it. If we would heal the backslider, we are to do it "in the spirit of meekness." If we would teach gainsayers, "in meekness we are to instruct those that oppose themselves." And if we would receive the ingrafted word, we must receive it "with meekness." This regards the understanding, the heart, and the life.

It requires the acquiescence of the understanding, with regard to the mysteries of the Gospel—This will keep us from proud cavils and reasonings; and cast down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. After God has spoken, we shall not ask, "How can these things be?" All our concern with the Scripture will be to inquire, *Is* this the word of God? and *what* does it really contain? For nothing should then remain but the most implicit assent. We make God a liar if we do not believe what *he* affirms; and *because* he affirms it. Our faith does not honour his

testimony if it must be founded on knowledge. If, on your reporting anything, concerning, for instance, a place, a person should say, I will believe it as soon as I have been there and seen for myself; would you not deem this an insult, either to your knowledge or veracity? Yet, if we believe the testimony of man, the testimony of God is greater. Men may delude us; but it is impossible for God to lie. We must therefore "receive the kingdom of heaven as a little child;" who never sets up himself against the judgment of his father, or questions the truth of his decisions: or, as the Apostle says, we must "become fools that we may be wise." Is this degrading my understanding? It is improving, perfecting it; it adds God's intelligence to my own—"In his light we see light."

It requires also the submission of the heart, as to the provisions of the Gospel. Speaking of the Jews, the Apostle says, "They did not submit themselves to the righteousness which is of God; for Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." The word seems strange. Should we say, a subject did not *submit* himself to accept of an invitation to the king's table? Was there ever an instance in which, when a rebel taken in arms, and condemned to die, was presented with a pardon, accompanied with a promise of more than restoration to all his former estate, he refused the mercy? and his sovereign was constrained to send his servants and his son to beseech him to submit? Yet God beseeches sinners by us; and we pray them in Christ's stead to be reconciled unto God. And herein appears not only the insensibility of man, but the pride of his yet self-righteous heart. He wishes to be

saved in his own way, and to be his own Saviour He revolts at the thought of being received on the same terms with the chief of sinners; to have nothing to glory in before God ; to have no hand meritoriously in the work, and no share of the glory ; to declare, when he has done all that is commanded, I am an unprofitable servant; and to cry, to the last, God be merciful to me a sinner—He stumbles at this stumbling stone. Did Naaman receive with meekness the order to wash seven times in Jordan and be clean? Did not the homely simplicity of the remedy fill him with resentment? so that he was turning away in a rage, and would have missed the cure had not his servants prevailed upon him to *submit*—And he washed and was healed. It is no easy thing to induce men to bow to the sovereign and abasing method which God has appointed for our relief: but when we are pressed with a deep sense of the absolute necessity of the plan, and we are enabled to see a little of its infinite excellency, we willingly and gratefully accept of the grace—approve of it—glory in it—and resolve to glory in nothing else.

It no less requires the obedience of the life as to the authority of the Gospel. For the Gospel not only assails self, but sin: it has not only the relief of a remedy, but the force of a law; and “whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the word, this man shall be blessed in his de~~ce~~” We naturally affect independence; and our language is, “Who is the Lord that we should obey his voice?” “With our tongues will we prevail, our lips are our own; who is Lord over us?” But this disposition must be subdued. We must deny ourselves, and

choose the Lord for our master. We must resign ourselves entirely to his pleasure, asking, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And, without dictation, without murmuring or repining, without choice or preference as to the way in which we are to serve him, we shall implicitly refer ourselves to his will, and say, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth."

To us is the word of this salvation sent. We have it; we read it; we hear it. Do we thus meekly receive it? Do we honour it with our confidence? Do we bend to its designs? Do we yield to its demands? Do we obey from the heart the form of doctrine delivered us? Or do we receive the grace of God in vain?

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## JULY 30.—MORNING.

"This is now the third time that Jesus shewed himself to his disciples, after that he was risen from the dead." JOHN xxi. 14.

Not the third time in succession—for he had appeared before this to the women, and to Cephas, and to James, and to the two disciples going to Emmaus. But the third time in kind; that is, the third time when the disciples were together.

—"And on this wise shewed he himself." The *place* was, "the sea of Tiberias"—called, also, the lake of Gennesareth, and the lake of Galilee. Who would not like to visit this sea, whose surface and whose shores so often felt the presence, and witnessed the miracles of the Son of God?

—The favoured *party* were: "Simon Peter, and Thomas, called Didymus"—he had lost much by his absence before, but now he keeps close to his brethren

—“and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee”—we thought well of him from the beginning; for though at first he had some infirmities, he was open to conviction, and loved retirement; and he who saw him under the fig-tree, assured him that he should see greater things than these—“and the sons of Zebedee”—John and James—“and two other of his disciples”—who are not named. But it may be asked, How came the disciples here, seeing when he rose from the dead they were—unless, perhaps, Nathanael—at Jerusalem? The Saviour had said, “The hour cometh, and now is, when ye shall be scattered every one to his own;” and it is said, “Then the disciples went away again unto their own home”—This was the effect of fear. But though fear made them flee, yet their repairing down into Galilee was enjoined them by the angel, who appeared to Mary Magdalene and the other Mary. And Jesus himself had said, before his death, “After I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee.” They believed his word, and obeyed; and He was faithful that promised.

—But how did he find them *engaged*? “Simon Peter,” who had a house of his own, and perhaps had retained the implements of his business, “saith unto them, I go a fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee.” This was not, as some imagine, blamable: as if they ought to have remained fasting and praying; or as if this exertion was the effect of despondency with regard to his appearance, and his care to provide for them. They acted commendably. It shewed their *humility*—that though advanced, they were not elated, nor ashamed of their former engagement; and their wish—not to be burdensome to any; if they could supply their own wants, and with

quietness work, and eat their own bread; and also their *diligence*—in redeeming their time, and not waiting for him in idleness. And he appeared to them, though not engaged in a religious exercise, but in a secular, honest calling; as the angels had appeared to the shepherds, when keeping their flocks by night. And if he came to any of us, by death, how much better would it be for him to find us active, in fulfilling the duties of a useful station, than telling our beads, or kneeling before a skull, or a crucifix in a cell! When Elijah was consciously waiting for the chariot that was to carry him to heaven, what did he? Retire to fast and pray? No; but he continued talking with his pupil and successor, for his improvement—determined to be useful to the last, and to live as long as he breathed—And blessed is that servant whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing.

—But “that night they caught nothing.” Though, in an ordinary way, the hand of the diligent maketh rich, yet this rule has its exceptions. These should be sufficient to teach us, that the blessing of the Lord, *if* maketh rich; and that, except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it. The race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong. Men, and even good men, may for awhile be baffled in their efforts; to teach them the lesson of dependence upon Providence; and to keep them, when success cometh, from sacrificing to their own net, and burning incense to their own drag, as if by these their portion hath been made plenteous.

—He loves to astonish, as well as relieve, his people; he therefore often delays his appearance, till

our hopelessness has prepared us for the display of his glory to the greatest advantage. Weeping may endure for a night; but joy cometh in the morning—"When the morning was come, Jesus stood on the shore." But they "knew not that it was Jesus"—supposing him to be some common person waiting their coming ashore, to purchase what they had caught. And this was the meaning of the question, "Children, have ye any meat?"—that is, Have you succeeded in fishing? And have you any provision to dispose of?—Upon their answering, No; he shewed his omniscience. He saw where a shoal was approaching the boat, and ordered them to "cast the net on the right side of the ship," assuring them, that they should find. They did so—and who ever lost by obeying him? So signal was their success, that they were not able to draw the net for the multitude of fishes!

—Thus good men sometimes see their affairs, after many a fruitless struggle, taking a favourable turn, and succeeding beyond their expectation. At evening tide it shall be light. "It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so he giveth his beloved sleep."—We shall look at this narrative again.

## JULY 30.—EVENING.

"And on this wise shewed he himself" JOHN xxi. 1.

—WE have traced this appearance down to the moment when the disciples ascertained who he was. John recognized him first; reminded, as it would appear, by a former miracle of the same kind; and on the performance of which, Peter had exclaimed, Depart from

me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord. Yet Peter was not at present struck with the recollection himself. But no sooner does John say to him, "It is the Lord," than the ship can hold him no longer; but, girding himself with his fisher's coat, he plunges into the sea to reach him! What rashness! What zeal! How perfectly in character does this man always appear! He was fervent; but acted by feeling rather than reflection. He had a warm heart. The Lord had lately turned and looked upon him in the judgment hall, and he went out and wept bitterly. He had had much forgiven; and he loved much. The Saviour had more than pardoned his late sad conduct; and had sent a message to him distinctively, "Go, tell my disciples, and Peter"! And how could he love him enough? And love is strong as death. Many waters cannot quench love; neither can the floods drown it.

—The rest of the disciples followed slowly, but surely, dragging the net. Had all done like Peter, the fish had been abandoned, and the vessel left to be drifted and injured. While we admire some, we must not condemn others. The dispositions and the duties of men are various: and while some perform splendid actions, and excite notice, others go ploddingly on in the sober discharge of their common calling—But they also have the testimony that they please God.

—What did they find when they came to land? "A fire of coals, and fish laid thereon, and bread." This was to shew that he cared for them: that they should be furnished, not only with grace sufficient for them, but with food convenient for them; and that verily they should be fed. He had reminded them of this on a former occasion. When he sent them

forth on their missionary excursion unprovided, they had misgivings how they were to be supplied—though they were ashamed to make known their fears: but he who employed them was bound to maintain them—and when they returned, he said, When I sent you forth without purse and scrip, lacked ye any thing? And they said, Nothing. “O fear the Lord, ye his saints: for there is no want to them that fear him! The young lions do lack and suffer hunger: but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing.” You serve a kind master, and the world is his, and the fulness thereof—Jehovah-jireh!—But we read, “Thou shalt eat the labour of thine hand;” and nothing has such a peculiar relish as what is gained by the blessing of God upon our own endeavours. He therefore also said unto them, “Bring of the fish which ye have now caught. Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land full of great fishes, an hundred and fifty and three: and for all there were so many, yet was not the net broken.” And thus, while they must have marvelled and adored at what was nothing less than a miracle, they were not only supplied for their immediate use; but the sale of the capture would pay their expenses back to Jerusalem, and while waiting there for the promise of the Father.

—Filled with reverence and awe, they seemed reserved, and disposed to keep back—He therefore invited them—“Come and dine. And none of his disciples durst ask him, Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord.” But still keeping back: “Jesus then cometh” to them, “and taketh bread, and giveth them, and fish likewise.” The meat was ordinary, and coarsely dressed; but it was wholesome; and

the appetite of labour made it welcome. We do not live to eat, but eat to live. Nature wants little, and grace less. Luther often dined upon a herring; and Junius, on an egg. If it be, as it is said, beneath a philosopher to be nice and finical in his food, how much more is it so in a Christian! in a minister! Jesus censured Martha, and commended Mary. The table *He* spreads for us is frugal and simple. It is the world, the flesh, the devil, disease, and death, bring in the rest. No mention is made of his blessing the repast; but there is no doubt but he did—It was his constant usage—to teach us to be religious in our common actions, and that man liveth, not by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

But did he actually partake of the provision himself?—What says Peter? “He shewed him openly; not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead.” Did he rise with the same body that he died? “Behold,” said he, “my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.” Did his body undergo any change before his ascension? Will things in a future state be possible that are not necessary? We know but in part. And the sacred writers prophesy but in part.

But, “Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God.” Let me be one of the number to whom he shall say, “Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations. And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed

unto me; that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

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## JULY 31.—MORNING.

"So when they had dined." JOHN xxi. 18.

THEY did not, we presume, continue long at table. Table, indeed, they had none. The place was the sea-side. The viands, bread and fish. The fare, dressed and served coarsely. Yet part of it was miraculously provided before they landed; and part of it supplied from the wonderful capture they had just made—Here were seven apostles—and the Lord of angels. Who, then, would not have been at the homely meal? Who, having any piety, or wisdom, would not have preferred the entertainment—thus dignified—however humble—to the sumptuous feast of Belshazzar, or Ahasuerus? Where there is much provision for the flesh, there is commonly little repast for the mind. And this is found *after* the meal. It has often been lamented, that the best part of society should be expected to withdraw as soon as dinner is ended: but females may be assured, that, with few exceptions, they sustain no loss by their withdrawal.

But here, when they had dined, discourse followed, which had been deemed worthy the page of inspiration; and was written for our learning and admonition. It commenced with an inquiry. "Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest

that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus said unto him, Feed my sheep."

The question was put to Peter because of his late conduct. Instead, therefore, of shewing any pre-eminence in him, it implied his fall, and tended to his humiliation. This, and this alone, was the reason why our Lord thus freely, yet tenderly, addressed *him* in the presence of his brethren—It was necessary both for *his* sake and for *their* sakes.

The question was first put comparatively—"Lovest thou me *more than these?*" There is something ambiguous and equivocal in the expression. Did our Lord, by *these*, refer to the fish, the nets, the boat, his present occupation and profit? Doddridge says, this is a forced and frigid sense. But this does not appear. By this calling, Peter had gained his subsistence—he might naturally be attached to it, and feel a degree of reluctance at leaving it, without any other means of support in view—and, as our Lord would be freely served, he inquires whether Peter was willing to resign all—and go a fishing no more—and be wholly engaged in his service. Or did he point to the rest of the disciples, when he said, Lovest thou me more than *these?*—That is, more than these thy brethren love me? To this, Whitby objects; because it would be impossible for Peter to answer such an

inquiry: as he could not know the hearts of others, and compare them with his own. But the question refers not to Peter's *knowledge*, but to his *opinion*. He had already expressed a degree of self-preference, as well as self-confidence, when he said, "Though all should be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended"—and he had now *done* more than the other disciples, in swimming to shore, to reach him first—"Am I, then," says Jesus, "to suppose that thou lovest me more than *these*?" Peter's reply shews his improvement. "I have done with judging others—and I say nothing of the *degree* of my love—but thou knowest the *reality*."

It was *thrice* renewed. Thrice is used as a kind of perfect number. In Peter's vision, the thing was done thrice, to render it the more observable. There is little doubt, however, that our Saviour alluded to the repetition of his offence—and the forewarning he had received—"Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me *thrice*."

Peter, when asked the question the third time, was *grieved*—This grief was not anger at the Saviour's conduct; but pain to think that he had rendered his love to so dear a Master suspicious; and fear, also—as he knew he never spoke in vain—that there was a cause for his additional inquiry, and that it intimated an apprehension of some fresh peril. This sensibility shewed a good frame of mind.

To *all* the inquiries he replies, without a moment's hesitation, and addresses himself, in *each* instance, to the Saviour's own knowledge, with an additional force in the last appeal—"Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee—I do not say, I shall never yield to temptation again—Lord, preserve me!—

And I wonder not that those who can only judge from outward appearance think unfavourably of me, after all that I have done. But thou seest the heart." We ought to stand clear with men; but it is a peculiar satisfaction, when we are misjudged of our fellow-creatures, to know that our witness is in heaven, and our record is on high.

After every answer, our Lord commands him to feed his lambs, and his sheep. Here, again, a desperate cause wants to find a proof of Peter's supremacy. But he is not told to lord it over all the other *shepherds*, but to do the work of a *pastor* himself—the very same thing which Peter, too, himself enjoins upon others—"Feed the flock of God that is among you." Yea, instead of his being exalted above his brethren, he is again reproved and abased. *They* had not forfeited their charge; but he had: and it was necessary to renew it. And therefore, now he is re-converted, he is re-commissioned. If a servant had offended and forfeited his place, it would not be enough for the master to say, I forgive thee, but I can no more trust thee, or employ thee. Nothing would be deemed a full restoration, but re-employment.

Two things may be observed here. First, the difference there is among the Lord's people. There are not only sheep, but lambs—These mean, new converts and weak believers. These are not to be disregarded. *He* does not despise the day of small things; and he tells those who are strong to bear the infirmities of the weak. Secondly, we see what the Lord requires as the principle of his service—"If you love me, Peter, feed my lambs, feed my sheep. I wish you to do nothing for me, unless you do it from love. This

alone will render your work your delight; and carry you through all your difficulties—Love is strong as death.” And while he requires the love as the principle of the service, he requires the service as the proof of the love. “ You cannot shew your love to me personally; shew it relatively. I have a cause—endeavour to promote it. I have followers—aid them; and inasmuch as ye do it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye do it unto me.”

This love, O my soul, is the grand thing! Without it, whatever be my religious pretensions, I am nothing. Let me put my name in the place of Peter’s; and suppose the Lord Jesus asking me this question—*Dost thou love me?*

“ Lord it is my chief complaint  
That my love is weak and faint :  
Yet I love thee, and adore ;  
Oh for grace to love thee more !”

## JULY 31.—EVENING.

“ Verily, verily, I say unto thee, when thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God.” JOHN xxi. 18, 19.

THIS was another part of his discourse, “ when they had dined.” He had enjoined Peter his doing work; and now he appoints him his suffering work. In such a world as this, doing well and bearing ill are commonly connected. In the first days of Christianity they were inseparable.

The representation may be applied to the difference there is between youth and age. The glory of young men is their strength. They can gird themselves;

and go, with ease and speed, whither they would. And let them use well their powers and opportunities. Let them be active and useful, and prepared for the future. Other days will come; and when they shall be old, they shall stretch forth their hands, and another shall gird them, and carry them whither they would not. Then they will be helpless and dependent. People long for age: but what is it but longing for days in which we have no pleasure; when we shall be dim-sighted; and hard of hearing; and tremblings will come upon us; and the grasshopper will be a burden; and desire fail! These are the effects of the state: and if by reason of strength our years are threescore and ten, yet is their strength labour and sorrow. Let us secure succour against such a period. It is said, an old man has no friend but his money. But if we are kind, and live not to ourselves, we shall not want those who will rock the cradle of our age. And, above all, God will be our comfort and strength; and bear and carry us; and gently take us to himself; where our youth shall be renewed like the eagle's, and mortality swallowed up of life.

But our Lord, we are assured, designed to intimate, that after Peter had served him as an apostle, he was to honour him as a martyr—"signifying by what death he should glorify God." Thus,

First. Our Lord foresaw Peter's sufferings, and the manner in which he was to finish his course. And he foresees all that shall befall each of us. We know not what a day may bring forth. But nothing is left to chance. No event will turn up that is new to him; and for which he has not provided.

Secondly. Peter was not to die till he should be old. Very good and useful men have been removed

in the midst of life: and this is one of the most mysterious dispensations of Providence. But this is not always the case. Religion conduces to health and longevity. Many of God's most eminent servants have "filled their days," and come to the grave in a good old age, like a shock of corn fully ripe, in its season. And the hoary head is a crown of glory, when it is found in the way of righteousness. Such a man is not only a kind of physical wonder—that he should have been preserved so long with such a feeble frame, and exposed to so many outward dangers: but a moral wonder—that, with such a heart, and in such a world, he should have held on his way, and kept his garments clean, and have been without offence. He is a monument to the glory of divine grace.

Thirdly. He was to die by crucifixion. This is the meaning of his "stretching forth his hands, and being girded, and carried whither he would not"—That is, his arms would be extended on a cross, and he would be bound, to be led to a death of violence, not agreeable to his feelings, and at which nature would revolt. For religion does not divest us of humanity; an aversion to pain is not inconsistent with submission to the will of God; we may love the result of death, and shudder at the passage. Paul wished not to be unclothed, but clothed upon: and Jesus himself, with strong cryings and tears, said, Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me. Peter would, and would not; there would be nature in him, as well as grace. And, while the spirit would be willing, the flesh would be weak. We see this related of some of the martyrs. Latimer, in one of his letters in prison, says to his friend—"Oh! pray for me! I sometimes shudder, and could creep into a mouse-hole;

and then the Lord visits me again with his comforts; and thus, by his coming and going, shews me my infirmity." Ridley, at the stake, said to the smith that was driving in the staple, "Knock it in hard, my good fellow; for the flesh may have its freaks." And when they were leading Rawlins along to the flames, chancing to see his wife and children among the crowd, he burst into a flood of tears; and, striking his breast, he exclaimed, "Ah! flesh, you would have your way; but I tell thee, by the grace of God, thou shalt not gain the victory."

Lastly. His death was to issue in the divine glory. Persecution has always been overruled to advance the cause it aimed to destroy. The wrath of man has praised God. The blood of the martyrs has been the seed of the churches. The death of such men has been honourable to the truth and grace of the Gospel. It has awakened attention, and induced inquiry; and, by displaying the temper and supports of the sufferers, such impressions have been made upon the spectators, that, before the ashes were extinguished, others were ready to be baptized for the dead.

We are not martyrs. But we are often called to suffer; and we may glorify God in the fires. There is only one way into the world; but there are many ways out. By which of these we are to pass we know not. But we may glorify God by the death we shall die—if we are enabled to exercise faith, patience, and repentance; if the joy of the Lord is our strength; and we can, from experience, recommend his service.

For this we should be concerned. But for this, we presume many would desire to die "softly, suddenly, and alone"—Yet what they should choose, they wot

not. They therefore leave all with their heavenly Father—only praying that Christ may be magnified in their body, whether it be by life or by death.

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## AUGUST 1.—MORNING.

"And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me. Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following; which also leaned on his breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee? Peter seeing him, saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do? Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me."

JOHN xxi. 19—22.

THIS is another part of the discourse "when they had dined." It is the reproof of Peter, who, though recovered from his fall, and re-commissioned to his office, was not faultless—Who can understand his errors?

The case was this. As soon as our Lord had tried Peter's love, and predicted his death, he said unto him, "Follow me." This is to be taken literally: for though it might be intended as a symbol, yet he now arose from his seat, and, walking away from the company, he told Peter to come after him—probably wishing to have some communication with him apart. Peter obeyed. But John, seeing this, and fearing that our Lord was departing, and would take Peter along with him, could not remain where he was; and so he followed them; silent and anxious, and, perhaps, weeping. Peter, turning round, sees him: and asks, "Lord, and what shall this man do?" It is probable this arose partly from an affectionate concern for his companion; and, considering the peculiar

friendship there was between them, we might have considered the question as excusable, if not even laudable.

But we are sure it was wrong in the motive. Peter, instead of being satisfied with a knowledge of his own duty and destiny, and praying to be able to perform the one, and endure the other, wishes to pry into John's future circumstances, and to know what was to become of *him*—whether *he* also should suffer; and what death *he* should die. This, in the view of him who reproved not according to the hearing of the ear, involved in it an improper curiosity—a principle, when indulged, always the most unprofitable in itself, and often the most rude in its exercise, and injurious in its effects. Our Lord always discouraged it; and therefore he here rebukes Peter in these memorable words—"If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me"—as I have commanded thee. How many things engage our time and attention which do not concern us! How often do we turn from what is plain and important; and perplex or amuse ourselves with what is too distant for us to reach; too deep for us to fathom; too complicated for us to unravel; or too trifling to merit regard! When poring over the future state of the heathen, and the destiny of idiots, and the decrees of God, and the union of fore-knowledge and free-agency, and the fulfilment of prophecy; is not the Saviour asking, "What is that to thee? follow thou me." "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed belong unto us, and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this Law."

Our present knowledge is proportioned to our pre

sent state. More information upon certain subjects would now injure rather than improve, by multiplying our diversions, and drawing us more off from the one thing needful. We are now in a state of action and preparation. Let us leave the knowledge that is too wonderful for us. A day-labourer will gain more of it in a moment after he enters heaven, than any philosopher or divine can acquire by the toil of a whole life on earth. Let us wait the great teacher, Death, and God adore—Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?

But what have we to do? FOLLOW THOU ME. Lord, help me to follow thee as thy disciple and thy servant—immediately, without delay—freely, without constraint—fully, without reserve—and constantly, without change, or—a shadow of turning!

## AUGUST 1.—EVENING.

"Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die: yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die; but, if I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?"

JOHN xxi. 23.

WHAT did he mean by his coming to John? It may be understood three ways.

—Of his coming to him by a natural death; and he was the only apostle who did not suffer a violent end.

—Of his coming to destroy Jerusalem; and he survived that event.

—Of his coming at the last day; in which case he answers Peter by the supposition of a miracle—“What if I chose that he should continue on earth till I come to judge the world?” In this sense it was taken.

But observe how it was mis-reported. Jesus only supposed a case; and it was turned into an assertion. He only said, *What if I will that he tarry till I come?* and it was circulated that he *should* so tarry—and the saying went abroad among the brethren that he should not die. Who has not heard the absurd story of the wandering Jew? Whether any now believe such a delusion, we know not: but we see what influence the notion had in the early ages. Beza mentions an impostor in his time, at Paris, who gave out that he was the deathless John, and was burnt at Toulouse.

But see how ready people are to credit things strange and wonderful—O that they were equally ready to receive the witness of God!

How many mistakes have arisen from deviating by little and little from the language of Revelation! Many errors might be prevented, and many rectified, if we could bring the parties to the *very words* the Holy Ghost useth. Let us distinguish between Divine truth, and men's explanations of it. Let us not take up with the statements of Calvin, or Arminius, or any other reporter, while we can go to the Scripture itself. “To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.”

But let us make a moral use of this misrepresentation, and learn the importance of accuracy in our statements. It is owing to the neglect of this that there is so much *circumstantial falsehood*. We refer to the relations of facts, true in substance, but false in circumstances. Some seldom ever apprehend things distinctly; and how can they report them accurately? Some have memories that never retain

perfectly what they hear. Some are careless. Some are full of eagerness and feeling: and love to excite—and for this purpose they love to enlarge and enhance. From one cause or another, many, who would shrink back from a direct lie, occasion deception by those omissions or additions which can give an erroneous turn or effect to the case spoken of. By this means, what aid is given to slander, and what injury is often done to character, where there is no risk on the one side and no redress on the other!

Look at the text, and see what consequences may result from the substitution of a *shall*, for an *if*; and always make conscience of your speech. Distinguish things that differ. What you know is probable, state as probable; and state as certain, only what you know to be certain. As a good remedy for this, and every other evil of the tongue—Let us be swift to hear, but slow to speak—Let us remember, that in the multitude of words, there wanteth not sin—Let us believe, that by our words we are to be justified or condemned—Let us keep our hearts with all diligence; for out of them are the issues of Life—Let us pray—Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth, keep the door of my lips.

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## AUGUST 2.—MORNING.

"I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life." REV. xxi. 6.

AND what can this fountain be, but himself? He is not a vessel or a reservoir, which, however capacious, is yet limited, and would soon be drained dry by continual drawing. But he is a fountain always full, always

flowing, always fresh. For the streams poured forth from a fountain are very distinguishable from the stagnant contents of a pool: the latter are dead; the former, living water. And what is this water of life which springs from himself, but the blessings of the Gospel, the influences of his Holy Spirit, or, as the Scripture calls it, "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ? Between this and living water there is an obvious and striking analogy. Each is of unspeakable importance: the one is as essential in the moral, as the other in the material world. Yea, the one is more necessary to the soul than the other is to the body. There have been instances in which physical life has been maintained for a long time (as in the case of Moses and Elias) without drinking, as well as without eating; but for the spiritual life to exist for a moment without the grace that is in Christ Jesus, is a miracle which never has been, and never will be accomplished. Does water soften? His grace makes the heart soft; and turns the very stone to flesh. Does water purify? "I will sprinkle," says he, "clean water upon you and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you." Does water fertilize? The man whose hope the Lord is, is likened to a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit. In what a condition would the earth be if the springs were exhausted, and the rivers dried up, or if rain was withheld for a few months only! Nothing can equal the barrenness of a soul devoid of Divine grace—But

this water of life quickens what was dead before, and produces all the fruits of righteousness.

The comparison could be pursued—But the particular allusion in our text remains. How welcome is cold water to a thirsty soul! How comfortable to the Jews, who had been three days without water to drink, were the gushings from the rock! Moses therefore says, “He brought them honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock”—He speaks in reference to their feelings—It was not oil or honey; but it was as sweet as the one, and as rich as the other, to persons dying with thirst. “I opened my mouth and panted,” says David, “for I longed for thy salvation.” “As the hart panteth for the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God.” Such desires as these grace is necessary to satisfy; and grace *can* satisfy them. “He that believeth on me shall never thirst.” He will never thirst in vain for the blessings he desires; while his thirst after other things, for which he raged before, is quenched, and he learns, in whatsoever state he is, therewith to be content.

Even the image is encouraging. By employing water to hold forth the blessings of salvation, our Lord intimates that they are plenteous, and open to approach without money and without price. Surely a nobleman would not forbid a poor traveller, in his weary journey, to kneel down and drink of the ample river that meandered through his estate. But Jesus says, I will “give” of the fountain of the water of life—yea, he goes further, and says, I will give “freely.” Surely this is enough—Yet it is not too much for the purpose. He knows the disposition

there is in man, who, ever since the Fall, is as proud as he is poor; and always thinks of deserving; and would rather buy than beg. He also knows what strong consolation is necessary to relieve the conscience of an awakened sinner, pressed down by a sense of depravity and guilt. He feels that he has nothing to pay or to promise—And he is assured that he needs nothing. “As your penury is such that you have no price to offer, my greatness, my goodness is such, that I disdain to require any. You are as welcome as you are unworthy. My blessings are too valuable to be purchased—I give them freely.”

Hence too we may observe the only requisite in the receiver. It is not the performance of any hard condition, nor the possession of any meritorious qualification—It is only want and desire; to him that “is athirst” I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely. This is indeed specified; but not in a way of desert or recommendation. It is not mentioned as the cause of the relief, but the character of the relieved. And it is wisely specified. Such persons as these are the very persons who are likely to exclude themselves, fearing, as they feel their unworthiness, the blessing cannot be designed for them. He therefore mentions them, so to speak, even by name; and, in addressing them, seizes the very thing from which they despond, to minister to their hope. To which we may add, that without this thirst the promise would be no promise; the blessing, no blessing—For such only can value it. The full soul loatheth the honeycomb; but to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet. What is a physician to them that are whole? or a refuge to them that are safe? Water is everything to the thirsty; but to others the stream

runs by uninvitingly and in vain. And how many are there who have no sense of their wants, and no desire after the Saviour!

But the cry of others is, Remember me, O Lord, with the favour thou bearest unto thy people, and visit me with thy salvation. No voice but his can relieve your fears. No joy but his can satisfy your souls. You long for him as the sanctifier as well as the Redeemer; and you wait for him more than they that watch for the morning. This is a proof of something good, and a pledge of something better. Refuse not to be comforted. Go immediately and drink. And drink largely. There is enough and to spare. And while you partake, invite others, and bring them to drink of the river of his pleasures. And look forward to the hour when you shall ascend to the spring-head itself. There you shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on you, or any heat—For the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall feed you, and shall lead you unto fountains of waters—And God shall wipe away all tears from your eyes.

## AUGUST 2.—EVENING.

"And the Lord said unto Moses, Write this for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua: for I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven." EXOD. xvii. 14.

THIS is the first time any mention is made in the Sacred History of writing. It was not known in the earlier ages. It does not appear that the Patriarchs were acquainted with it. And simple and familiar as the art now seems, it is difficult, if not impossible, to account for it without a divine origin. Wakefield,

a fine scholar, though an erroneous divine and a radical politician, and far from any leaning to enthusiasm, yet after much reflection has contended that it must have been derived at first from a divine communication. However this may be, it was a most wonderful invention. What pleasures and advantages have been derived from it! How has the lover blessed the use of letters! How thankful has friendship been for news from a far country, which has been like cold water to a thirsty soul! By alphabetical characters improvements have been preserved from age to age, and additions been constantly making to the general stock of knowledge. But how much do we owe to it as Christians! What is the "Scripture" but the *writing*? All that relieves our spiritual wants and supports our eternal hope has reached us, and continues to delight us, by means of what holy men wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost—

"Our nation reads his written word,—  
That book of life, that sure record :  
The bright inheritance of heaven  
Is by the sweet conveyance given."

It is probable that from this time Moses began to keep a journal of striking and useful occurrences. Great men have frequently done the same for intellectual, and good men for religious purposes. Diaries were formerly much more common among pious people than they now are. This is to be lamented; for though their frequent publication was unnecessary, and their minuteness often rendered them exceptionable, they served to promote self-attention and acquaintance; and recorded events and circumstances with the impressions they produced at

the time, which could not be reviewed without some utility. Whatever may be said of the particular mode, the thing itself is of importance. If we are to be affected with past transactions, and views, and feelings, they must be in some way secured and retained: when buried in forgetfulness, they can have no influence to reprove or encourage, to excite gratitude or to increase confidence. And as, like the Jews, we are liable, and, alas! prone to forget the works of the Lord and the wonders which he has shewn us, we should write them, if not as Moses was enjoined to do, in a book, yet in the fleshly tables of our hearts. "O my people," says God, "remember now what Balak king of Moab consulted, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him from Shittim unto Gilgal; that ye may know the righteousness of the Lord." And when his disciples seemed ready to despond because they had only one loaf on board, our Lord said to them, "Remember ye not the miracle of the five barley loaves and the two small fishes, and how many baskets full of fragments ye took up?" "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits."

A reason is assigned for the recording and rehearsing of this transaction, in a dreadful menace: "For I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven." So highly did God resent the injury intended against his people. So dear are they to him, and so truly are they one with him, that he who toucheth them toucheth the apple of his eye. Let those who oppose them tremble—"I will curse him that curseth thee."

The threatening was executed partially by Saul; but fully by David, after whose time we read no more

of the Amalekites as a *people*. For some stragglers of course escaped and survived, and were to be met with in various countries. Haman, whose mortified ambition led him to contrive the destruction of the Jews, was one of this detested and exterminated nation.

The Scripture cannot be broken. Whatever improbabilities appear, whatever difficulties stand in the way, whatever delays intervene, God's counsels of old are faithfulness and truth; and heaven and earth shall pass away sooner than one jot or tittle of his word shall fail. This applies to the destruction of the wicked, as well as to the salvation of the righteous. And it applies not only to nations, but to individuals. Behold a signal instance. "And Joshua adjured them at that time, saying, Cursed be the man before the Lord, that riseth up and buildeth this city Jericho: he shall lay the foundation thereof in his firstborn, and in his youngest son shall he set up the gates of it." And what says History, more than four hundred years after, in the reign of Ahab? "In his days did Hiel the Bethelite build Jericho: he laid the foundation thereof in Abiram his firstborn, and set up the gates thereof in his youngest son Segub, according to the word of the Lord, which he spake by Joshua the son of Nun."

Lord, increase our faith.

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## AUGUST 3.—MORNING.

### AUGUST 3.—MORNING.

"For the inhabitant of Maroth waited carefully for good: but evil came down from the Lord unto the gate of Jerusalem."

MICAH i. 12.

THIS refers to the invasion of the Assyrian, the rod of God's anger. He had subdued and ravaged Israel, and now entered the kingdom of Judah. The prophet laments the horrors and miseries of the scene; and describes the effects of them upon the places lying in the line of his march. The village of Maroth was one of these. It was very interior, and was situated nigh Jerusalem; for which reason probably the inhabitants themselves thought that they were safer than those who lived on the borders of the country. "For the inhabitant of Maroth waited carefully for good: but evil came down from the Lord unto the gate of Jerusalem." This may serve to remind us—of the disappointments of life—of the source of calamity—and the season of deliverance.

They "waited," waited "carefully for good;" but in vain: "evil came"—Is such a disappointment a strange or an unusual thing? What is there in life that is not uncertain, and does not expose the hope that is resting upon it? Is it substance? Is it health? Is it children? Is it friends?—Does the Scripture only cry, "All is vanity;" and, "Cease from man, whose breath is in his nostrils?" Does not all history, observation, and experience, tell us the same? Let therefore the young, let those who are entering into new connections and conditions, let all be sober in their expectations from every thing earthly. It is the way to escape the *surprise* and the *anguish* of disappointment. And let us make the Lord our *hope*. He

will not deceive us: he cannot fail us. If creatures are broken reeds, he is the rock of ages—"Blessed are all they that put their trust in him."

See also the source of calamity—"Evil came down from the Lord." This at first seems strange. We are assured that "every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights." But "let no man say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for he cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man." And this is true of moral evil, or the evil of sinning. But Micah speaks of natural evil, or the evil of suffering. And what calamity is there that the Scripture has not ascribed to God? Is it a storm at sea? "He breaketh the ships of Tarshish with an east wind." Is it barrenness of soil? "He turneth a fruitful land into barrenness, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein." Is it the loss of connexions? "Lover and friend hast thou put far from me." "Is there an evil in the city and the Lord hath not done it?"—War is the evil here peculiarly intended. We often connect this more with the follies and passions of men than other evils; but the hand of God is no less really in it. He has "created the waster to destroy." "Out of him came forth the corner, out of him the nail, out of him the battle bow, out of him every oppressor together." Let us never view our sufferings, public or private, personal or relative, abstractedly from God. Especially let us beware that instruments do not lead us to overlook his agency. They could have no power at all against us, except it was given them from above. The Chaldeans and the Sabeans spoiled Job: but, says he, "the Lord hath taken away."

The question is, how this evil comes from him? Much injury is done by our separating what the Scripture has joined together. Some view God's mercy as separate from his justice; and some his justice as separate from his mercy: the one of these partial views genders presumption, the other despair. These extremes would be avoided by our considering God as at once the righteous governor and the tender father. Every thing in his present administrations is adapted to shew the union of his holiness and goodness, and to awaken both our fear and our hope. The evils he sends are the *effects* of sin; yet they are the *fruits* to take away sin. We *deserve* them, and we *need* them; the one shews that we have no *right* to murmur, and the other that we have no *reason* to complain. What is required of a Christian is a ready and cheerful submission; but this can only be produced by our seeing the reference our affliction has, not only to our desert, but to our improvement. The thought of God as a sovereign may repress murmuring; but it is the belief not only that his judgments are right, but that in faithfulness he afflicts, and in love corrects us, that enables us to acquiesce, and say, "Here I am, let him do what seemeth him good."

Mark also the time of deliverance. Though God saves his people, he may permit the destruction to draw very nigh. This was the case here. He could have hindered the calamity at the frontier, but evil came down from the Lord "unto the gate of Jerusalem." So far the overflowing did come; and the insulting foe encamped on the fuller's field adjoining the city; but no further. Here were his proud waves stayed. Here ended his power and triumph. Hazo-

kiah conquered him upon his knees. The Lord put his hook into his nose, and his bridle into his jaws, and drew him back. Yea, the angel of the Lord slew in his camp in one night upwards of one hundred and eighty-four thousand of his troops—Shewing us not only that God can deliver, in the greatest straits, but that he frequently does not interpose till the evil has reached its extremity. Thus Peter was not released from prison till a few hours before his appointed execution: and Abraham had bound Isaac, and seized the knife, and stretched out his hand, before the voice cried, Forbear. Whenever therefore he seems indifferent to our welfare, and does not immediately, or even for a length of time, interpose on our behalf, let us not accuse him of unfaithfulness and inattention. Let us distinguish between appearance and reality. His kindness, wisdom, and power, are secretly at work for our good. The delay is not abandonment. He is only waiting to be gracious; and the season in which he will appear to our joy will display his glory, and draw forth our praise. In the mean time, let our minds be kept in perfect peace, being stayed upon God; and let us remember, if things are gloomy and discouraging, that the lower the ebb of the tide, the nearer the flow. It is often darkest just before the break of day. “IN THE MOUNT IT SHALL BE SEEN.”

## AUGUST 3.—EVENING.

“I will consider in my dwelling-place like a clear heat upon herbs, and like a cloud of dew in the heat of harvest.” ISAIAH xviii. 4.

PREACHERS should be very sparing of their animadversions on the translation of the Scriptures in

common use; not only because they tend to shake confidence and awaken suspicions in their hearers, but because they are generally needless. It is not illiteracy that commends the present version; the ablest scholars are the most satisfied with it upon the whole. Yet, while the original is divine, the rendering is human; and therefore we need not wonder if an occasional alteration is necessary. This is peculiarly the case where the sense is very obscure or even imperceptible without it.

If the words as they now stand in the text remain, his "dwelling-place" is heaven, and the meaning is, that he would *there* consider how to succour and bless his people, for he *careth* for them: but a word must be supplied to shew the import—"I will consider in my dwelling-place" how I can prove "like a clear heat upon herbs, and like a cloud of dew in the heat of harvest." But the margin, and Lowth, and every modern expositor, make his "dwelling-place" not the *place* of his consideration, but the *object*: and read, "*I will regard* my dwelling-place like a clear heat upon herbs, and like a cloud of dew in the heat of harvest." Now what his dwelling-place was we can easily determine. It was Zion—"Whose dwelling is in Zion." "This is my rest for ever, here will I dwell, for I have desired it." And Watts has well added—

"The God of Jacob chose the hill  
    Of Zion for his ancient rest;  
And Zion is his dwelling still,  
    His Church is with his presence blest."

And his concern for the welfare of the one is far surpassed by his regard for the other. And how is this accounted? Here are two images.

First, "like a clear heat upon herba." The margin again says, "Like a clear heat *after rain*;" and I wish, says the excellent translator of Isaiah, who has adopted it, that there was better evidence in support of it. The reason is, that he probably feared, as others in reading it may fear, that "a clear heat upon herbs" would be rather unfavourable, and cause them to droop, if not to die. And this would be the case in some instances; but not in all; and it is enough for a metaphor to have one just and strong resemblance. Read the dying words of David; "And he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain." Now after rain "the clear shining," or "a clear heat upon herbs," would produce immediately fresh vigour and shootings. Even in our own climate the effect upon the grass and plants is soon visible; but in the East the influence is much more sudden and surprising, and the beholders can almost see the herbage thrive and flourish. Thus the Lord can quicken his people in his ways, and strengthen in them the things that remain and are ready to die. And when after the softening comes the sunshine, they grow in grace and in the knowledge of their Lord and Saviour. Their faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of them towards each other aboundeth. They bear much fruit. Thus we read of "increasing with all the increase of God."—This figure therefore expresses growth and fertility.

But the second holds forth refreshment, seasonable refreshment; "like a cloud of dew in the heat of harvest." How cooling, useful, welcome, delightful such an appearance is, ask the labourer in the field,

in the Eastern field, bearing the burden and heat of the day. God, as the God of all comfort, realizes the truth and force of this image in the experience of his tried followers—First, in their spiritual exercises and depressions arising from the assaults of temptation, a sense of their unworthiness and imperfections, and fears concerning their safety and perseverance. And, secondly, in their outward afflictions. These may be many; and if our strength is small, we shall faint in the day of adversity. But when we cry, he answers us, and strengthens us with strength in our souls. He gives us a little reviving in our bondage; and in the multitude of our thoughts within us his comforts delight our souls. He is able and engaged to comfort us in all our tribulation. By the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ; by his word; by his ordinances; by the preaching of a minister; by the conversation of a friend; by a letter, a book, a particular occurrence of Providence, a time of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord—and a cloud of dew be furnished in the heat of harvest.

Such is the God of love to his people. Are his consolations small with us? O that we were better acquainted with his perfections, and covenants, his promises, and the joy of his salvation!—Let creatures help out our meditations of him. We lose much in not using nature as a handmaid to grace. Let us aid our faith even by our senses. What a state will that be where God will be all in all!

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AUGUST 4.—MORNING.

"I said, Lord, be merciful unto me: heal my soul, for I have sinned against thee." PSALM xli. 4.

THIS is an excellent prayer. The man that utters it *confesses that he is a sinner*: "I have sinned against thee." "If we say we have not sinned, we make God a liar, and his word is not in us;" and the reason is, because his word declares that "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." Sin is the transgression of the law; and to judge of the one we must understand the other. By the law therefore is the knowledge of sin: and when the commandment comes in its purity and spirituality, and we see that it extends to the heart as well as to the life, to the motive as well as to the action; when we see that desire is adultery, and anger murder;—sin revives; forgotten offences are remembered; and a thousand transgressions and aggravations are discovered of which we had no apprehension before. The conviction of our sinfulness may commence with some one gross sin first striking the conscience: but we are soon led on from one iniquity to another. From the more gross we pass to the more refined; and from the streams we ascend to the fountain—till we find the heart, and see that this is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. But the greatest sin of which we are convinced is unbelief—"He shall convince the world of sin, because they believe not on me." "He is despised and rejected of men—and of me! I have trampled under foot the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. O let me

look upon him whom I have pierced, and mourn for him."—

He also considers *sin as the disease of the soul*. "Heal my soul; for I have sinned against thee." Sin affects the soul as disease affects the body. In bodily disease the parts of the system do not properly and freely perform their office; there is always some obstruction or derangement; and therefore the man is said to be *disordered*. It is the same in the sinner; the powers and functions of the soul are injured and interrupted. Does disease deprive the body of beauty, and appetite, and freedom, and strength? So does sin the soul. Does disease tend to the death of the body? Sin issues in the death of the soul. But the death of the one is temporal; while the death of the other is eternal. Who can tell the import of eternal death? It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. Yet the result is no more dreadful than it is certain—The soul that sinneth it shall die. The end of those things is death.

He also views *God as the only physician*—Therefore to him he applies: "Lord—heal my soul; for I have sinned against thee." This disease, like the leprosy under the law, is inaccessible to human remedies. We cannot heal our own soul. Creatures cannot heal us. The sooner we have this persuasion the better. All other physicians to whom we may apply, though they may cost us much, will be found physicians of no value. But he comes forward and says, "I am the Lord that healeth thee." How? How does he heal the soul meritoriously? By the sufferings and death of his own Son: "by whose stripes we are healed." How does he heal it efficiently? By the influence of his

Spirit: "we are saved by the washing of regeneration, and by the renewing of the Holy Ghost." He does not cure like an empiric who only strikes in the disorder, checking the effects and retaining the cause, soothing the pain and undermining the patient—if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature. His very dispositions are changed. He is not only restrained from sin, but mortified to it. And how can he who is dead to sin live any longer therein? How does he heal the soul instrumentally? By his word; by preaching; by the ordinances of religion; by the dispensations of his providence. Afflictions, though the effects of sin, are the fruits to take away sin. The sufferings of the Christian are not penal inflictions, but fatherly chastisements—or, to keep to the metaphor, they are medicinal applications, and, like other medicines, we are to judge of them not by the unpalatableness of the taste, but the ~~savetiveness~~ of the operation.

He is also persuaded that *nothing but mercy in God will induce him to undertake the cure*: "I said, Lord, be merciful unto me: heal my soul; for I have sinned against thee." Here is the only source of our hope. We have no claims upon him, even for his pity. We are not only miserable, but criminal; and as children of disobedience, we lie entirely at his mercy. It is for this to determine whether we shall die or live. To this therefore our recovery must be ascribed; and to this the Scripture always ascribes it—"according to his mercy he saved us." And in this case we read of his abundant mercy; and of his being rich in mercy.

Indeed the mercy he displays in our recovery is not only real, but pre-eminent. In nature and providence

his mercies are new every morning. It is mercy that feeds us and clothes us; it is mercy that refreshes us in our sleep, and comforts us in our friends. But the salvation of the soul is the mercy of mercies.

## AUGUST 4.—EVENING.

"I will remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermites, from the hill Micah. PSALM xliii. 6.

THERE are two ways of understanding this; each of them instructive and profitable; and both of them perhaps included in the full import of the words—For what, says Bishop Horne, we call the different senses of a Scripture, are often but the different parts of the complete sense, which, being unable to take it at one view, we are compelled to survey successively and separately.

It may be considered as an expression of determined remembrance of God should he ever be found in such places and conditions. Believers can suppose the worst, and yet hope for the best; for they have a resource which can meet even every possible exigency. Hence the prophet could say: "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." The Church did the same, in the words to which Luther was so attached: for when the less courageous Melancthon was ready to sink at any unfavourable appearances or reports, "Come," would he say, "Come, brother, let us sing the thirty-sixth Psalm, and let Rome and hell do their

worst : " God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea." So David imagined scenes which would have appalled others, and yet could maintain his faith and hope in God— " Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil ; for thou art with me ; thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me." " From the ends of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed." " I will remember thee from the land of Jordan, and from the Hermonites, from the hill-Mizar"—as if he should say, " If I am exiled from my palace, and the sanctuary ; if my enemies drive me eastward, or southward, or in any other direction, no distance can exclude me from access to thee : wherever I am I will think of thee, and be encouraged." It is then a resolution to exercise confidence in God, in present difficulties, distresses, and dangers, whatever they may be.

But the language may be considered as an expression of encouragement derived from reflection. He had been in these situations and circumstances ; and had experienced in them displays of Divine providence and grace. What these were he does not mention ; but they would always in review strengthen his trust in God. It is therefore much the same as he resolves in another psalm : " This is my infirmity ; but I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High. I will remember the works of the Lord : surely I will remember thy wonders of old."

This shews the advantage of years. The old Christian has not a better God than the younger one ; but he has had better opportunities of knowing him ;

and they that know his Name will put their trust in him. And we see what is our duty and privilege with regard to God's dealings with us; it is, to observe them and treasure them up in our minds: for they are designed not only for present relief, but for future improvement; that when we meet with new trials our confidence may spring forth afresh at the recollection of former mercies. "Because thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice."

We know a good deal of the geography of the land of Judæa. We can find the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites; but what or where was this hill Mizar? The word, as you see in the margin, signifies "the little hill:" and it would have been better so to have translated it. It seems to have been a spot rendered very dear to David, by the occurrence of something very interesting and encouraging there. I have been always led to conjecture that it was the place in which he had been so wonderfully saved from the lion and the bear. He was then a shepherd. Suppose him some clear starry night watching over his flock. While leaning on the edge of the fold, he looks and sees a bear creeping round the base of the hill: suppose him on another evening attending late his fleecy charge; and as soon as he had laid down his harp he heard a lion growling as he issued from a neighboring wood: and in each instance he had thrown himself upon the foe, and slain him, and rescued the lamb that he had seized! what an impression would this have made upon his imagination; and how could he ever have recurred to it without gratitude and confidence? If there be probability in this conjecture, his language

will be much the same as his avowal to Saul when going to engage Goliath.

All places are the same to God; but they are different to us. If we were going over the land of Judæa, and imagined that one spot of the ground was intrinsically holier than another, it would be superstitious: but what could be thought of us if we did not peculiarly feel as we stood in Bethlehem where Jesus was born, or on Calvary where he died? What an interest must individuals feel in particular places! How awful to a murderer must be the spot where his brother's blood is still crying unto God from the ground! How affecting to a soldier must be the field of battle where he was exercised with the intensest anxieties that were ever felt! We have read of an Irishman who, when oppressed with a sense of his guilt and danger, entered a wood, and earnestly prayed under a tree, till he obtained a hope of deliverance. Some time after, meeting with a poor creature distressed in the same way, he pressed him to go with him to the same spot. It was not the place but the exercise that had procured for him the relief; but the force of the association could be easily accounted for, especially on a rude and ignorant mind. Happy they who not only love to walk in woods and fields, and by running streams, but can refer to spots made sacred by meditation, and in which they have exclaimed, "This is none other but the house of God; and this is the gate of heaven."

Who has not places to which he can advert, in which God has turned the shadow of death into the morning, broken the snare of temptation, commanded for him deliverance, or afforded him some support and consolation which have enabled him to go on his

way rejoicing? O! these "little hills;" they are worth their weight in gold! Let them never be forgotten.

"Here to these hills my soul will come,  
'Till my Beloved lead me home."

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## AUGUST 5.—MORNING.

"Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe." JOEL iii. 13.

THE season renders the language interesting; and we may consider the words, literally, as an address to husbandmen.

The husbandman waiteth for the precious fruits of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and the latter rain. He casts the seed into the ground, where it seems lost. For awhile, he sees nothing to reward his labour and expense: for that which he soweth is not quickened except it die. But it soon revives and rises: and he perceives the blade, gently breaking through the earth. Then comes winter. The wind howls over it; the frost bends and binds it; the snow covers and oppresses it. But it weathers all. The spring arrives. The stalk shoots up. The ear appears, and the full corn in the ear. The crop ripens; and the golden harvest waves its treasures; and calls for the reaper to fill his hand, and he that bindeth sheaves his bosom. The husbandman may think little or nothing of God—unless he wants fine weather; but it is *He* that worketh all in all. Whatever interventions there may be, *He* is the first cause: "I will hear, saith the Lord, I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth; and the earth shall hear the corn,

and the wine, and the oil ; and they shall hear Jezreel."

And herein we see the power of God. The spectators wondered when five loaves were multiplied into a sufficiency for more than five thousand consumers. Why are not we struck, when we see the grain in the earth annually increasing thirty, sixty, an hundred fold ? It is the commonness of the effect that prevents astonishment. The only difference in the cases is, that in the one instance the operation is sudden : in the other, it is slow ; but this magnifies the agency, instead of detracting from it.

And here we see the truth of God. When Noah and his family left the Ark, and saw the new world, every appearance of cloud awakened their fears ; and God, to tranquilize them, said, "I will not again smite any more every thing living, as I have done. While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, shall not cease." And every time the sickle is put in, he tells us that he is a faithful God, and that we may always rely upon his word.

Here we behold his goodness. For *whom* does he thus constantly and plenteously provide ; but an unworthy, guilty, ungrateful world ; who will overlook his kindness, and abuse his benefits, and turn his gifts into weapons of rebellion against him ! Were he to deal with them after their desert, or reward them according to their iniquities, the heavens over us would be brass, and the earth iron ; the grain would perish in wetness, or be burnt up with drought ; and we should have cleanliness of teeth in all our dwellings ; and while the children cried for bread, the mother would have none to give them.

Here we also trave the wisdom of God. For though all things are of God, he does not encourage sloth. Our activity is as necessary as our dependence. Though there is a part we cannot do, there is a part we can do; and if this be neglected, God will do nothing. We cannot furnish the soil; but we must manure it. We cannot produce the seed; but we must sow it. We cannot ripen the field; but we must reap it. "What thou givest them, that they gather."

Let us be thankful that another of these pleasing and instructive periods has arrived. And while we see the valleys standing thick with corn, and hear the little hills rejoicing on every side, let us pray for the appointed weeks of harvest.

—And, remembering another, and an infinitely more important opportunity, may we give all diligence, while it continuos, to secure its blessings; lest, in the anguish of disappointment, and the remorse of despair, we are forced to exclaim, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not SAVED." "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation"—Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe.

## AUGUST 5.—EVENING.

"Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe." JOEL. iii. 13.

We have taken these words literally; let us now view them metaphorically. We have heard them addressed to the husbandman. Let us now consider them as addressed—

—First, to the ministers of the word. That we are allowed such an application is obvious. Ov. Lord

said, "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest that he would send forth labourers into his harvest." By harvest, he intends, means of usefulness, and opportunities: by labourers, those whose office it is to endeavour to make use of them. So again: "Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? Behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest." Here he refers to the season of doing good to the Samaritans, which he was now improving; for, in consequence of the testimony of the woman, many of them were eager to hear, and were coming over the plain. The case is, when the grain is ripe, if it be not gathered in, it is liable to perish. The season for saving it is short and uncertain. Men, therefore, forego ease, and endure fatigue, to secure it. Yet what is the safety of the grain, to the salvation of souls! How many are destroyed for lack of knowledge! But the period is favourable for informing them. We have religious freedom: our exertions are unimpeded. None makes us afraid. We have the Scriptures in full circulation. The rising generation are taught to read. Religious parties excite and emulate each other. Prejudices are wearing away. Persons are willing to hear. And not preachers only, but parents, masters, neighbours. Christians at large—all, in doing good, have the finest opportunities, if they will seize them; and the loudest calls, if they will obey them—But the space for all this will not, cannot continue—Therefore, "whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest."

Secondly, as addressed to public judgments. Thus we are principally to understand the passage before us. The people spoken of were ripe for ruin: God therefore calls for the executioners of his wrath to cut them down. Thus it was with the people of Canaan, when their iniquity was full; and Joshua and his army were the reapers. Thus it was with the Jews themselves: and Nebuchadnezzar was called in to punish them; and afterwards the Romans to destroy them. Thus it has been with many nations since. And thus it has been with many a community, even in our own times. The work was soon done: for the reapers were the Lord's; and the fields were fully ripe—Are we in danger? We have reason for apprehension, if we estimate our condition by our guilt, and our guilt by our privileges. Let us not be high-minded, but fear. God can never be at a loss for instruments. He can mingle a perverse spirit in the midst of us. He can take wisdom from the prudent, and courage from the brave. Hearts, events, elements, are all his. He has a controversy with us; and, by menacing dispensations, seems to say aloud, Cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground? But these threatenings are mercifully conditional. "At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and pull down, and to destroy it; if that nation against whom I have pronounced turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them." May we hear, and fear, and turn unto the Lord—and he will leave a blessing behind him, that we perish not.

Thirdly, as addressed to the messengers of death—accidents, diseases, whatever can bring us to the grave. This regards us individually. Whatever be the des-

tiny of the nations, we know our own destiny: old or young, rich or poor, it is appointed unto us, once to die—This is the way of all the earth.—But when are people ripe for this removal hence?

It is certain that sin ripens the transgressor for hell. But *when* he is ripe, it is not easy to decide. The most grossly and openly vicious are not always the most guilty before God. We see a profligate wretch, and deem him ripe for ruin; and wonder *he* is not cut down—when, perhaps, though not immoral, we ourselves are much more criminal in the sight of Him who judgeth righteously. He, perhaps, never had our advantages; and was pressed by severer temptations than we ever knew. If asked, therefore, *when* a man is ripe for destruction, we acknowledge we cannot determine. But it must be wise to beware; and to keep from every approximation to such a dreadful state. Surely when a man is insensible under the word; and incorrigible under the rebukes of Providence; and his conscience ceases to reprove; and he can turn divine things into ridicule; he must be, as the Apostle says, “nigh unto cursing.”

Holiness ripens the saint for glory. But here, again, when he is matured and made meet for it we cannot ascertain. Actions strike us: but some have few opportunities for exertions; and yet they have much of the life of God in their souls. We should think favourably of a man in proportion as he was dissatisfied with himself; and esteemed the Lord Jesus; and relied upon him; and was anxious to resemble him; and acknowledged God in all his ways. However, the Lord knoweth them that are his, and them that are not his; and he chooses the most proper

time to remove them: the wheat for the barn; and the chaff for the burning. But the end of all things is at hand. And,

Fourthly, God thus addresses his angels at the last day. When this mandate will be given is uncertain. But we are as sure of the event as we are ignorant of the period. And then shall the Son of man come in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. Then cometh the end. Then all will be ripe. His purposes will be accomplished. His promises and threatenings will be verified. Time itself will be no longer. The earth will be cleared of all the produce; and the very fields in which it grew will be destroyed. "The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom: but the tares are the children of the wicked one; the enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear."—

Let him hear *this*. How many things are continually said! And how are we to judge of them? One says, this is excellent; another, this is all-important. But if you would know what is the *real* value of these things, bring them to the *standard*—bring them to the *great day!* How do they abide *this trial?*

"Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot and blameless." If you say, "All this is far off, and many things must be previously accomplished," remember you cannot say this of death—there is but a step between you and death. How soon, therefore, may all the prophecies be fulfilled and the world be at end, with you! And as death leaves you, judgment will find you. Many who once had the warnings are now in possession of the facts. Could we ask them—now they have entered the eternal world by death, and are waiting for the judgment to come—Is there one of them that would not bear his testimony to the importance of every Sabbath, and every sermon, with which you are favoured? Is there one of them that would say, "While I was living, the preacher was too close, and too alarming?" Rather would he not say, "Why was he not more in earnest?—And oh! wretch that I was, to disregard his voice—and come into this place of torment!"

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## AUGUST 6.—MORNING.

"I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do."

JOHN xvii. 4.

THIS work was the redemption of the Church. It was no secular purpose that brought him into the world. He came not to act the merchant, the philosopher, the statesman, much less the warrior; but to be the Redeemer of Sinners. And "in him we have redemption through his blood."

For to him was the execution of this work intrusted

—It was “given him to do.” Great undertakings require great qualifications and abilities. And here was an enterprise to which all the angels in heaven, though they excel in strength, would have been found inadequate. But help was laid on One that is mighty. He had everything that could fit him for the work. It was necessary that he should be human, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh; and “the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.” It was necessary that he should be innocent; and “he did no sin;” “he was manifested to take away our sin, and in him was no sin.” It was necessary that he should be voluntary, for there is no value in undesignated or constrained actions; and he made himself of no reputation, he laid down his life of himself, he loved us and gave himself for us. It was necessary that he should be divine, his divinity was required to sustain his humanity, and to add value to his doings and sufferings; and “in him dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.”

He therefore fully accomplished this work, and could say—“I have *finished* the work which thou gavest me to do.” Yet how was this true? For though his active as well as passive obedience was included in his engagement, and though he lived the man of sorrows for us, yet without shedding of blood there was no remission; and it was by the sacrifice of himself that he made an end of sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness: but as yet he had not agonized in the garden, nor died on the cross. We answer; the thing was as good as done—It was near at hand—It was absolutely certain. Purpose and fulfilment are the same with God. Hence the language of prophecy and promise announces things

future as present, and even as past. "Unto us," said Isaiah, "a child is born," ages before the incarnation of the Messiah ; and, earlier still, David represented him as saying, "They pierced my hands and my feet: they parted my garments among them, and cast lots for my vesture."

Let us, therefore, distinguish between redemption and salvation. Salvation was not accomplished on earth, but in heaven. We are reconciled unto God by the death of his Son; but we are saved by his life. He is exalted at God's own right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour. This work he has not finished, but is still carrying on, and will be carrying on till all his people are called and glorified. Accordingly it is said, "They shall be saved;" and, "he will appear the second time without sin unto salvation." But redemption was his work on earth: and he said, when he expired, "It is finished:" and he "entered into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us."

The Apostle infers the inefficacy of the legal sacrifices from their repetition, justly arguing that if they could have put away sin they would have ceased to be offered, and the worshippers once purged would have had no more conscience of sins: but Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and once was sufficient. By the one offering up of himself he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. His resurrection was an undeniable proof of the completeness of his satisfaction: it was, so to speak, a receipt in full, given to our Surety, to prove that he had paid our debt, and set us free for ever.

What an indignity is put upon him by any attempt to add to his work! Yet some talk of "filling up

that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ." But the Apostle, in these misapplied words, refers to the sufferings of his servants in his cause and for his sake, and not to the sufferings he personally endured, when atoning for our sins he bore our grief, and carried our sorrows. What can be "lacking" here? What can be added to that which is not only perfect, but infinite?

"The death of Christ shall still remain,  
*Sufficient, and alone.*"

We want no penance, no purgatory—His blood cleanseth from all sin. We want no mediator, no patron—but our advocate with the Father, who is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world—We make mention of his righteousness only.

Let his finished work relieve and encourage us under all our imperfections. We complete nothing. In every thing we come far short of the glory of God. Even our duties would condemn us, as well as our sins, if God should deal with us according to our desert. We ought to be humbled for our deficiencies; and we shall deeply bewail them before God if our hearts are right with him. But the foundation of our hope lies not here. We glory in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. He redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us. We live through him. We are accepted in the Beloved. We are complete in him. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

## AUGUST 6.—EVENING.

"Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty: neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me."

PSALM CXXXI. 1

THIS address was a proof of David's sincerity. His aim was not to be heard of men, but of God, "the Judge of all." He therefore does not speak of him, but to him. Rash and daring appeals to God are the last refuge of impudent falsehood, and never make an impression in favour of a man's truth on any reflecting mind. But if in your retirement, when you are alone with the Supreme Being, you can look up to Omnicience, and say, "Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee;" if you can kneel before him, and pray, "Search me, O God, and know my heart, try me and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me:"—this is coming to the light; this yields one of the best evidences of our uprightness.

There are various cases in which such an appeal to God is more than allowable. Let us notice one only. It is when we lie under the misconception of friends, the censure of neighbours, and the reproach of enemies, and we have not the opportunity or power of removing them. How pleasing and satisfying is it then to turn from ignorance, prejudice, and cruelty, to the God of our righteousness! Thus Job, when condemned as a hypocrite, whose sins had now found him out, said, "Behold, my witness is in heaven and my record is on high;" and made no scruple to say, "Thou knowest that I am not wicked." There are instances in which we may act with the greatest con-

scientiousness, and yet be unable to induce another to enter into our views, or make him feel the pressure of those circumstances, the aggregate of which decides our own minds. Herein appears the advantage of reputation; for when a man's character is well established, he ought to have, and he commonly will have, credit given him for a doubtful or unexplained occurrence: for though a tree is known by its fruit, where it cannot be seen, the fruit may be judged of by the tree, which is known—David was accused by Saul and his courtiers and followers, as a restless and proud young man, who wished to work himself out of privacy into notice and power. But his rejoicing was this, the testimony of his conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, he had had his conversation in the world; and more abundantly to them-ward. For the best witnesses in our favour are those who are most about us and know us best. Can we appeal to our wives?—Can we appeal to our children? to our servants?—Can we appeal to our own hearts?—Can we appeal to God, who is greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things? “Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty: neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me.”

“Yet did he not rise from a cottage into a palace?” This was not from himself, but from the appointment of Him who putteth down one and setteth up another, and giveth no account of any of his matters. The elevation was not his planning, his seeking, his choice. He gained nothing from it as to enjoyment. He was never so happy as when a shepherd in Bethlehem. It was not till he had left that peaceful re-

treat he exclaimed, "Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest." But it was the will of God that made him what he was, leading him, as blind, by a way that he knew not, and in paths that he had not known. The Lord also who raised him qualified him for his station and his work: and no one could have conducted himself after such an amazing change, with more humility and modesty.

Let his language be remarked and improved by us. Let us learn from it not to soar, unless in spiritual concerns. We may set our affection on things above; and ought to have our conversation even in heaven; but as to temporal things, let us learn, in whatsoever state we are, therewith to be content; and abide in the callings in which we have been called of God. "Seest thou great things unto thyself? Seek them not." Aspire not to fill places and offices above your capacity.

- Some render it obvious enough to others that they *do* exercise themselves in great matters, and in things too high for them. And when persons have not sense enough to discern their inadequacy themselves, is it not desirable that some of their friends should have faithfulness enough to tell them; and thus save them from exposure and ridicule? At public meetings, chairmen and speakers commonly begin by avowing their insufficiency and unfitness—But if they believe what they say, why *do* they engage? Such apologies *in general* (for there are exceptions) go for nothing, or are considered only as seeking praise by the affectation of humility.

Paul tells every man that is among us not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but

to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith. There are mysteries and difficulties in religion. Is it not much more consistent with lowness of mind to keep near what is plain and useful than to roam after things beyond our reach? What have we to do with the fate of idiots and heathens? We know our own danger—"How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" What have we to do with the decrees of God? But his commands and invitations meet our duties and our wants. Secret things belong unto God; but things that are revealed are for us and for our children. Yet how fond are we of attempting what is incomprehensible or abstruse! Where other parts of Scripture have had one interpreter, the Canticles and the Apocalypse have had twenty. "Where angels tremble, fools break through and gaze." Our Saviour said, even to his apostles, "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power." Yet what a rage has there often been for prophetical discussions! And though no one useful truth has been discovered, or practical advantage gained by all the stirs which have been made in these troubled waters: though all the schemes, which occasioned such a noise for a time, have proved after a while visionary, and left their founders and advocates ashamed of their confidence; others rise up with equal zeal and equal assurance in support of new theories. But they also will have their day. The ferment soon subsides. These speculations and conjectures cannot operate as principles, for want of certainty. Yet though they do no good they may do evil, by occupying the attention, and drawing off the mind from the main thing; by injuring the temper

and by producing self-conceit and a contempt for others—for people are never more confident than when they are uncertain; or more eager to make converts than when they need an accession of suffrage, to support their hypothesis and recommend it.

We should be able also to make David's appeal as to the dispensations of Providence. God's way is in the sea. The reasons of his conduct are inscrutable. Let us not attempt to correct what cannot be imperfect; or to criticise what we do not understand. Let us be still, and know that he is God. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counselor?"

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## AUGUST 7.—MORNING.

"For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power."

1 Cor. iv. 20.

LET us not abuse, but improve, the important decision. It may be *abused* in two instances.

First. When it leads us to undervalue the outward institutions of piety, and the ordinary means of grace. Some would so refine religion as to make it unsuited to human beings. We have bodies, as well as souls; and we are required to glorify God in the one, as well as in the other. Our devotion is indeed nothing unless we "lift up our hearts with our hands;" but bodily exercise need not be excluded in order to our worshipping in spirit and in truth.—There may be the form of godliness without the power: but,

while we are here, the power cannot be displayed or maintained without the form. Enthusiasts may tell us, they never had so much religion as since they have given up what are called its ordinances; for now every day is a Sabbath, and every place a temple, and every voice a preacher. But they are not to be believed. Even all the private and practical duties of life are most fully and regularly discharged by those who wait upon God in his appointments. It is a dangerous delusion that leads people to the neglect of those means of grace which God, who knoweth our frame, has enjoined us to use; and to the use of which he has promised his blessing. In the new Jerusalem John saw "no temple there:" but the experience of every Christian leads him, while he is here, to love the habitation of God's house, and to acknowledge that it is good for him to be there. The streams that will be needless when we reach the fountain-head are valuable in the way. Our present aliments will be unnecessary hereafter; but what pretender would be so ethereal as to dispense with them now?

Secondly. When we are heedless of regulating the energy of our religion by the rule of the word. It is desirable to enlist the feelings on the side of truth and excellence. Impulse is useful, and even necessary; to exertion and success; but, in proportion to its force, it requires guidance, if not restraint. It is good to be always zealously affected in a good thing; but, without knowledge, zeal may even in a good cause carry us astray: so that our good may be evil spoken of, and even produce evil. Something must be allowed for persons wanting in judgment; and for young converts, especially if they have been sud-

denly awakened. The novelty and the vividness of their views and impressions of eternal things may occasion some mistakes and improprieties in harmonizing religion properly with secular and relative life. But what we excuse we are not to commend. If one duty defrauds or kills another, it is a robber or a murderer. The wise man tells us, every thing is beautiful in its season; and Paul enjoins us to do every thing decently and in order. But, under the sanction of such a supposed authority as our text, we have known religious servants who have risen above their masters, and lectured and reproved them—We have known men who have left their callings, and rushed into offices for which they were not designed—We have known females, who, instead of being keepers at home, have neglected their husbands and children to gad about after favourite preachers—We have known orthodox professors who have broken out into every kind of rudeness and rancour, under a notion of being faithful, and valiant for the truth. Disputants have contended earnestly for the faith, with pens dipped in gall, and tongues set on fire of hell—Persecutors have killed others to do God service; and the priest, with the crucifix, has urged the dragoon not to do the work of the Lord deceitfully, or keep back his sword from shedding of blood!

The decision may be *improved* by applying it in two cases. First, in judging ourselves. And here the leaning should be to the side of severity. Let us be satisfied with nothing short of the real power of religion. Whatever we depend upon, while we are strangers to this, will be more than useless—it will issue in the most dreadful disappointment. It is better to err on the side of caution than of self-con-

rity. According to our Saviour, the delusion accompanies some to the very door of heaven: they knock, with confidence that they shall be admitted; and are surprised and confounded when they hear from within, I know ye not whence ye are. Do not place your religion in attending on divine ordinances; or in a mere belief of the truth; or in some outward reformation; or in some particular course of duty to which you may have inducements that render it easy. Search and try your ways. See whether you have given God your whole heart, and can sacrifice every bosom lust. See whether your religion has any thing in it above the efficiency of natural principles—whether it is flesh or spirit; whether you are under the Law, or under Grace. Examine yourselves. If believers—Does your faith work by love? And do you love in word and in tongue, or in deed and in truth? If penitents—Have you said, with Ephraim, What have I any more to do with idols? If worshippers—Do you only draw nigh to him with the mouth, and honour him with your lips, while your heart is far from him? If hearers—Has the Gospel come to you, not in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance?

Secondly, in judging others. And here the leaning should be to candour. We should beware how we deny this power to a fellow-professor, without just evidence. It is always a difficult thing to decide the degree of another man's religion. Men differ exceedingly, even in their natural temperament. How sanguine is one! How phlegmatic is another! Some are constitutionally bold and forward; others are equally timid and retreating. Is it to be supposed that all these will shew their piety precisely

in the same manner? We often ascribe to a religious ardour what is the effect of a liveliness and volatility of temper. Hence, when we meet with an individual who is always speaking on religious topics, we are apt to consider him a zealous soul; and to suppose that all his talkativeness proceeds from pious principle: whereas it is more than probable, if we followed him through life, we should find him as eager on secular occasions as on religious. On the other hand, when we meet with a man who shrinks from notice, and is backward to speak of divine things, and especially of his own experience, we frequently set him down as one who is not fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. But may not this man be very much the same in all other cases? And if so, should we not do him injustice by judging of his state in religion by the slowness of his speech, and the hesitation of his temper, and the tardiness of his conduct, which constitute a caret in his whole life? Judge not after the outward appearance; but judge righteous judgment.

Again. If you have reason to conclude that a fellow-Christian has this divine reality, let it satisfy you. Love and esteem him, though he differs from your opinions; and walks not with you in the outward order of the Gospel. What is the chaff to the wheat? I love those Scriptures which inspire us with a zeal, not to make proselytes to a party, but converts to the Saviour—which tend to unite the truly pious to each other, and embattle them against the common foe—which diminish those inferior things that bigots are always magnifying; and attach supreme importance to those that infinitely deserve it—“For the kingdom of God is not in word but in power.” “For the king-

dom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy, in the Holy Ghost." "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God."

## AUGUST 7.—EVENING.

"Surely I have behaved and quieted myself, as a child that is weaned of his mother: my soul is even as a weaned child."

PSALM CXXXI. 2.

WEANED from what? Self-sufficiency, self-will, self-seeking. From creatures and the things of the world—Not indeed as to their use, but as to any dependence upon them for his happiness and portion. The desire of David's soul was to the Lord, and the remembrance of his Name: and his language was, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none on earth that I desire beside thee"—"As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness"—"There be many that say, Who will shew us any good? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us. Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased"—No wonder *he* could say, "My soul is even as a weaned child."

Yet this experience is no easy attainment. The very form of expression—"I have behaved and quieted myself"—reminds us of some risings which were with difficulty subdued. There is a difference here between Christ and Christians. In him the exercise of grace encountered no adverse principles;

but in them it meets with constant opposition. The flesh lusteth against the Spirit; and when we would do good, evil is present with us—Hence the warfare within. So it is with “the child that is weaned.” The task to the mother is trying and troublesome. The infant cries and seems to sob out his heart—He thinks it very hard in her, and knows not what she means by her seeming cruelty; and the mother's fondness renders all her firmness necessary to keep her to the process—and sometimes she also weeps at the importunity of his dear looks, and big tears, and stretched out hands. But it must be done—And therefore, though she pities, she perseveres—and after a while he is soothed and satisfied; forgets the breast; and no longer feels even a hankering after his former pleasure.

But how is the weaning of the child accomplished? By embittering the member to his lips—By the removal of the object in the absence and concealment of the mother—By the substitution of other food—By the influence of time. So it is with us. We love the world, and it deceives us. We depend on creatures, and they fail us and pierce us through with many sorrows. We enter forbidden paths, and follow after our lovers: and our way is hedged up with thorns—and we then say, Return unto thy rest, O my soul—and now, Lord, what wait I for? My hope is in thee. And what says the Saviour? He that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth in me shall never thirst: meaning, not only that they shall not hunger and thirst after spiritual blessings in vain; but also that they shall not hunger and thirst after other things, as they once did, before they tasted that the Lord is gracious. The enjoyment

of a greater good subdues the relish of a less. What are the indulgences of sin, or the dissipations of the world, to one who is abundantly satisfied with the fatness of God's house, and is made to drink of the river of his pleasures?

This is the blessed state we should seek after. The want of this weanedness is the source of apostacy and backsliding. It was because her heart was left in Sodom that Lot's wife looked back. It was because he loved the present world that Demas forsook the Apostles. Owing to the want of this, we have so many inconsistencies in professors of religion. They are yet attached to things from which they are restrained; and in the sight of God they are considered as still pursuing them. Give me a Christian that is *weaned* from them, having found something infinitely superior. He who lives most in the enjoyment of his heavenly privileges will be the most secure from the evil of temptation, and walk most worthy of the vocation wherewith he is called.

We should also be concerned to exemplify this disposition with regard to our state and circumstances in life. The secret of happiness is, not the enlargement of our means, but the limitation of our desires. Let us consider ourselves as only strangers and pilgrims on earth. Let us say with the Shunamite, "I dwell among my own people." Let us learn, in whatsoever state we are, therewith to be content. Let us say, "The Lord shall choose our inheritance for us"—leaving all to his wisdom and goodness—and desiring nothing that he withholds—

"Pleas'd with all the Lord provides;  
Wean'd from all the world besides."

## AUGUST 8.—MORNING.

"Lord, teach us to pray." LUKE xi. 1.

THIS was the language of one of his disciples, as soon as he had heard *him* pray "in a certain place." He did not interrupt our Lord in the exercise; but when he had ceased, he said, wishing to resemble him, "Lord, teach us to pray."

It was well in him, not only to attach importance to prayer, and to feel his own ignorance and insufficiency in the performance, but to address one who is always able and willing to hear and help us. None teaches like him. Four ways he teaches to pray.

First. By his word. A form or model—why not both?—was immediately given these disciples—"He said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy Name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth. Give us day by day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil."—The Scripture at large has many instructions how we are to pray. In one place we are told to pray without ceasing—in another, to come boldly to the throne of grace—in another, to let our words be few—in another, to ask in faith, nothing wavering—in another, to ask in the name of Jesus—"If ye shall ask anything in my Name, I will do it."

Secondly. By his example. Whoever lives without prayer, *he* did not. His example has the force of a law; and he "that saith he abideth in him, ought

himself also so to walk even as he walked." As to place—he prayed in the wilderness, and he prayed in the garden. As to time—we read of his rising up early in the morning to pray; and praying in the evening; and continuing all night in prayer. As to observation—he prayed privately, alone, and with his disciples, and in public. As to cases—he prayed when he was baptized: and has taught us to sanctify all ordinances and duties by prayer. When going to send forth his apostles, he prayed, to teach us to engage in no enterprise relying on our own wisdom and strength. When he was transfigured, he prayed, to teach us how to escape the snares of glory and greatness. With strong crying and tears he made supplication, when he was sore amazed and very heavy, to teach us, if afflicted, to pray. To teach us to love our enemies, when they pierced his hands and his feet, he prayed—"Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." And to teach us how to finish our course, he dies praying—"Into thy hands I commend my spirit."

Thirdly. By his providence. Ah! Christians, this may explain many a dispensation that has made you tremble and grieve. "I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face; in their affliction they will seek me early"—that is, I will teach them to pray. What did Absalom when he wished for an interview with Joab, who, when sent for, refused to obey? Go, said he to his servant, and set his corn on fire—and then he will soon come. And so it fell out. And speedily and eagerly approaching him, Why hast thou done this? says Joab. Absalom replies—Not because I designed to injure thee; but I wanted to

converse with thee; and my messengers were rejected. So, when you are lifeless in prayer, and backward in the exercise, and disregard the invitation, "Seek ye my face," some fiery trial consumes or threatens some of your possessions or comforts; and, alarmed and perplexed, then you anxiously say unto God, "Do not condemn me; shew me wherefore thou contendest with me." You then also want succour and consolation; and therefore pray, "Let thy loving-kindness be for my comfort, according to thy word unto thy servant." How many of the prayers of God's people in the Scripture were, both in their reality and excellency too, the offspring of those measures by which the Lord, in chastening, taught them!

Fourthly. By his Spirit. What means "praying in the Holy Ghost," but praying by his influence? Why is he called "the Spirit of Grace and of supplications"? Is it not because he brings us upon our knees, and keeps us instant in prayer? If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his: and this Spirit awakens the conscience, and makes us sensible of our needy and perishing condition; and shews us the importance and glory of divine blessings; and causes us to hunger and thirst after righteousness; and leads us into all the truth connected with our relief; and, through the blood of the Cross, inspiring hope and confidence, enables us to cry, Abba, Father.

Nor is it only in the beginning of a devotional life that this assistance is required: "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities," says the Apostle: "for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with

groanings which cannot be uttered." And where is the Christian who would not often have given over the exercise, under a sense of his imperfections and weaknesses, but for the hope of the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ; and the promise, "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him!" This has revived him again; and, out of weakness, he has been made strong; and delighted himself in the Almighty.

Happy they who, by the great Teacher, are thus taught to pray. You may be ignorant of many things. But you know your way to the throne of grace. You may have little learning; but you can speak the language of Canaan. You may be unnoticed of your fellow-creatures; but your fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And a life of prayer will soon be followed by an eternity of praise.

But how awful the condition of those who never express this desire—Lord, teach us to pray! Can the love or the fear of the Lord dwell in you? Can you dispense with the blessings of salvation? Or do you think that God, who has said, "For all these things will I enquire of," will deny himself? Well: *another* instructor will soon teach you to pray—a dying hour—a judgment day. But you will pray in vain! "Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer: they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me."

## AUGUST 8.—EVENING.

"There shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek." ISAIAH xi. 10.

THESE words lead us to observe three things with regard to the Messiah. First, his coming in the flesh. "There shall be a root of Jesse." Some contend that the expression establishes the divine nature of our Lord, and refer to his own authority, when he said, "I am the root and the offspring of David." As a root bears the stem, and not the stem the root, so, say they, our prophet would signify that he is the source of Jesse's being, and not that he derives his being from him. If we do not yield to this reasoning, it is not from a disbelief of our Saviour's divinity, or because we think it of little importance in the Christian scheme; but because we are persuaded every passage of Scripture should have its own proper meaning, and no more stress should be laid upon it than it was designed to bear; for a bad argument always injures a good cause. If we wished to prove what we fully believe, that he had a Divine nature, according to which he made Jesse and all other creatures, we would go at once to the testimony of John—"All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made;" or to the decision of Paul—"By him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth," visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him and for him." But "a root of Jesse" means a scion, a shoot springing out of one of his roots;

or, as it is expressed in the beginning of the chapter, "There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots."

The phrase marks the family from which he should arise. This was not known for a long time, and was the effect of a gradual discovery of him. First he was revealed as the seed of the woman or a partaker of human nature, then as of the seed of Abraham, then as of the tribe of Judah, and lastly, as of the house of David; and this was so familiarly known when he was on earth, that beggars addressed him as the son of David. It also shews his humble estate. The Scripture often sets forth the various degrees of human condition by trees and plants. We find Nebuchadnezzar's greatness represented by a tree, whose height reached to heaven, and whose shadow covered the earth; while his abasement was expressed by the cutting it down to the ground, and leaving only the stump in the ground. Jesus is not described as a fine tall tree, full of boughs and leaves, but as a sucker from an unpromising, and seemingly dead root. He was poor and mean in the estimation of the world; for though he had real and unspeakable worth, though in him were found all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and in him dwell all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, all this is less than nothing and vanity by the side of guineas and ribbons, in the eyes of the multitude. Therefore says our Prophet, "He shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him."

Hence it is not said, "a root of" David who had been a mighty monarch, but of "Jesse," whose name

was unrenowned ; implying that at the time of his appearing the house of his lineage would be reduced to its original obscurity. And so it was. Joseph, that son of David, his reputed father, was a carpenter, and his mother a poor virgin, probably working with her hands when her honours were announced to her by the angel. Thus the King of kings and Lord of lords was born—not in the city of Jerusalem, but in a village in the north of Galilee, little among the thousands of Judah—not in a palace, but in a stable. Thus, as he advanced in life, he had not where to lay his head ; his hearers were the common people ; and the ministers of his kingdom, fishermen from the lake of Galilee. This has always scandalized the pride of reason : but “Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.”

Secondly, his destination—“Which shall stand for an ensign of the people.” Here is a new metaphor, for no single image will do him justice ; yea, all that we can employ must fall short of his glory. But each figure aids our conception of some particular part of his character and office. Of old, it was customary in time of war for the prince or commander to erect an ensign on a mountain or hill, there to summon the inhabitants of the province to place them in military condition, by furnishing them with arms, training them, assigning them their rank and place, and giving them their orders. Thus Jesus was lifted up on the cross that he might draw all men unto him ; and thus he is lifted up in the preaching of the Gospel, that he might gather together in one the

children of God that are scattered abroad. Therefore it was said, "to him shall men come," "to him shall the gathering of the people be"—as soldiers repair to the oriflamb suspended over the chief's tent. The allusion is just and suitable. The religious life is a warfare. Christians are good soldiers of Jesus Christ. He is the captain of their salvation, the Leader and Commander of the people. He conducts them, not to carnage and infamy, but to glory, honour, and immortality. His warfare is not carnal, but spiritual; and it is a good warfare; and they need not be afraid to follow his movements; he cannot err. With him they are always safe. He will teach their hands to war and their fingers to fight; he will renew their strength; he will make their way prosperous—Yea, in all these things they are more than conquerors through him that loved them.

Thirdly, his successful influence—"To it shall the Gentiles seek." In his quotation of the words, the Apostle varies the language, and says, "In his Name shall the Gentiles trust." But there is no inconsistency between this seeking and this trusting; the one is the cause, the other the effect; or rather each is alternately both cause and effect too. Because we trust in him we seek him; and when we seek him we find how worthy he is of our trust, for they that know his Name will put their trust in him. The trusting is the seeking in the principle; and the seeking is the trusting in the exercise.

But who were to be the subjects attracted? "The Gentiles." Nothing could have been more unlikely when this assurance was given. The whole world was lying in wickedness, and abandoned to the most abominable idolatries, "without Christ, being aliens

from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world." What probability was there that *these* should believe in one who was crucified, and become followers of the meek and holy Jesus? But it had been announced, and it was to a surprising extent accomplished. We may see the change in our own country. We were heathens, led away of dumb idols, and enslaved by comfortless and cruel superstitions. But what a prevalence, and what triumphs, for ages, has the Gospel attained here! And yet without miracles; and by the blessing of God upon means far inferior to those we possess, and upon exertions made under far greater disadvantages than we have to contend with. How groundless is missionary discouragement! What has been done—may be done. Is any thing too hard for the Lord?

And we here see not only the power of God, but we see the nature of the Gospel dispensation. It forbids none, however unfavourable their condition and character. It cries Peace, peace, to him that is far off, as well as to them that are nigh. The Gentiles were called dogs by the Jews; and our Saviour himself speaks of them as inhabiting the highways and hedges, and as the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind. Yet for these there was room. These were to be compelled to come in. The Saviour excludes none but those who exclude themselves; and he even complains of their conduct—"Ye will not come to me that ye might have life." Let the vilest of the vile, let the chief of sinners seek to him, and try the graciousness and truth of the promise that has been the sheet-anchor of thousands—"HIM THAT COMETH UNTO ME I WILL IN NO WISE CAST OUT."

## AUGUST 9.—MORNING.

"Give Glory to the Lord your God, before he cause darkness."  
JER. xiii. 16.

—THE removal of the Gospel is darkness. The Gospel will never be removed from the world; but it may be withdrawn from a particular place or people. And this has been done. The Jews are an eminent example. The kingdom of God was taken from them. And when we consider the miracles, the institutions, the privileges, by which they were distinguished, and see how they were all laid waste, well may the Apostle say, Behold the severity of God—and if he spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee. Where now are the seven churches in Asia? Where is the famous church of Rome, whose faith was spoken of throughout the whole world? At present, you have the inestimable benefit. Be not as the swine, who knows not the value of the pearl, and therefore tramples it under foot. What wonder if the manna should be taken away, when you despise it as light food? The Scriptures may be continued, and the preaching of the Gospel be removed: and thus the word may be precious, because there is no open vision. What a blessing to see our teachers; and to hear a word behind us, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it! Faith cometh by hearing. And what if the Lord should send a famine in the land—not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water; but of hearing the words of the Lord—and we shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it? Give glory to the Lord your God, before he cause darkness.

—Impenitence is darkness. A man may be surrounded with food ; yet he dies, if he cannot use and digest it, as much as if the aliment was wanting. The means of grace may remain, and we become incapable of deriving benefit from them. It is an awful fact, that God punishes one sin by another, and judicially blinds those who provoke him. Because they like not to retain him in their knowledge, he gives them up to a reprobate mind. Because they receive not the love of the truth, that they may be saved, he sends them strong delusion to believe a lie. They are joined to idols ; and he lets them alone. They delight in error ; and they find it. They seek objections to the faith once delivered to the saints ; and they are overcome by them. They trifle with the Gospel ; and, at length, they cannot seriously regard it, or feel any impression under it. Thus is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand ; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive. Give glory to the Lord your God, before he cause darkness.

—Public calamity is darkness. Was not the Babylonish bondage darkness to the Jews ; when their country, the glory of all lands, was desolated ; and they carried away captives, and oppressed as slaves, and insulted as a proverb and a by-word ? And would not national distress be darkness to us ? Some effects of this we have experienced : but how inconsiderable have they yet been, compared with the sufferings of other countries, or with our own deserts ? And is there no danger of greater ? If God has a controversy with us, it is in vain to argue—we must submit. If he is provoked and determined to punish, vain is the authority of rulers, the wisdom of states-

men, the courage of warriors. “But he has a people among us.” He has—and he will take care of his own: but he can secure them, and destroy others. Or even they themselves may help forward, or even occasion the calamity—for no sins offend him like those of his own people. And they may be chastened of the Lord, that they may not be *condemned* with the world. When the ship sailed from Joppa, there was only one good man on board; and the storm was for *his* sake: and the sea could only be calmed by his being cast into it. Give glory to the Lord your God, before he cause darkness.

—The loss of reason is darkness. And how soon may the understanding be eclipsed! How easily may the slender and mysterious basis on which intellect rests be destroyed! See Nebuchadnezzar eating grass like an ox. See the philosopher, moping in drivelling idiocy. Religion can only operate through the medium of thought: and therefore, while you have your mental powers, employ them—lest darkness come upon you.

—The loss of health is darkness. Is it nothing to be made to possess months of vanity? or to have wearisome nights appointed us?—To be chastened, also, with pain upon our bed, and the multitude of our bones with strong pain; so that our life abhorreth bread, and our soul dainty meat; and our bones, that were not seen, stick out? Yet, on this season, many suspend an attention to the concerns of religion. When thought is broken to pieces; and every avenue to the soul is occupied with the anguish of disease, and the anxieties of recovery, surely sufficient for that day is the evil thereof. Use your health while you have it, lest darkness come upon you.—The same

applies to age. Then desire fails; the grasshopper is a burden: sight, and hearing, and memory, and judgment, decline. Remember, therefore, says Solomon, now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.

—Death is darkness. Then you must give up your employments, however interesting; your possessions, however valued; your connexions, however endeared; your religious advantages, however important—and, stripped and silent, retire into the gloom of the grave. This darkness is certain. It cannot be remote. It may be close at hand. There may be but a step between me and death—"Before I go whence I shall not return, even to the land of darkness, and the shadow of death; a land of darkness, as darkness itself; and of the shadow of death, without any order, and where the light is as darkness."

—Hell is darkness—outer darkness; where there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth. The dreadfulness of this state it is impossible either to describe or imagine. But we know that it is possible to escape it. We also know, that the present is the only opportunity. Behold *now* is the accepted time; *now* is the day of salvation. Give glory to the Lord your God, before he cause darkness.

Blessed be God for his longsuffering goodness, and his warning mercy. He might justly have spared his words, and come instantly to blows. But he speaks before he strikes: and he threatens that he may not destroy. May the kind alarm awaken our

fear ; and may our fear produce flight ; and may we flee for refuge to the hope set before us, even Jesus, who delivers from the wrath to come.

## AUGUST 9.—EVENING.

"The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage." PSALM XVI. 6.

WE may put this acknowledgement into the mouth of an INDULGED CHILD OF PROVIDENCE.

David seems to refer to the division of the land of promise by lot. What fell to the share of his tribe had some special advantages, for which he expresses himself with gratitude and joy. He had also been raised up from an obscure and contracted station to the possession of honours and resources, which filled him with wonder and praise, and led him to exclaim, "Lord, what am I, and what is my father's house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?" There are many who are similarly favoured, though not in an equal degree. They have independence ; or, if they have not abundance, they have competency, which Agar deems far preferable. They have an agreeable calling. Business prospers, and exceeds their wants. They have a peaceful dwelling and affectionate connexions. They have health, and power to relish the beauties of nature, the bounties of earth, and the endearments of social life—

"Not more than others they deserve,  
Yet God has given them more—"

And far more—Their cup runneth over.

Only let them remember, that these indulgences

are not the “one thing needful;” and that it becomes them to say, with Watts,

“Without thy graces and thyself,  
I were a wretch undone.”

Or, with Cowper,

“Give what thou canst, without thee we are poor  
And with thee rich, take what thou wilt away.”

Whatever these outward blessings may do for them, they cannot reach their principal exigencies. They profit not in the day of wrath, nor deliver from death, nor evince the friendship of God, nor relieve the burdened conscience, nor heal the wounded spirit, nor content the cravings of an immortal mind. Yea, they should also remember, that they are in peculiar danger from these enjoyments. The peril is, that they trust in uncertain riches, and not in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy—That they make the creature a substitute for the Creator—That they lose the heart of a stranger—That they forget their resting-place—That their thoughts are drawn off from home by the agreeableness and delights of the way—That their table becomes a snare—That their prosperity destroys them. The writer, some years ago, in a neighbouring city, received in the pulpit the following note: “The prayers of this congregation are earnestly desired for a man who is prospering in his worldly concerns.” And if he did this sincerely, and there is no reason to question it, the man shewed an acquaintance with the weakness and depravity of human nature. He had studied himself. He had observed others. He had also read his Bible to purpose, which informed him how Joseph, in the court of Pharaoh, swore “by

the life of Pharaoh;" how David in his prosperity said, "I shall not be moved;" how Hezekiah, delivered, recovered, honoured, "rendered, not according to the benefit done him, for his heart was lifted up;" how Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked—"then he forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the rock of his salvation."

Yet these things are good in themselves; and display the bounty and kindness of God; and yield us a thousand comforts and advantages. And who could imagine that they were bestowed upon those who are not worthy of the least of all his mercies; yea, upon rebels who deserve his wrath? Surely it becomes the possessors to be thankful, and to say, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits." Surely they must be the vilest of all beings, whose feelings do not often produce the acknowledgment, "The lines are fallen to me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage."

"But all are not thus indulged: all cannot use this language." Yet more *might* use it: and more *would* use it—if they were more sensible of their desert, more humble, more disposed to compare conditions, not with those above them, but with those below them. For while they are injured in their circumstances, others are ruined. While they have lost one child, others have been bereaved of all their offspring. While they have occasional infirmities and ailments, others are bedridden, made to possess months of vanity, and have none assurance of their life. We do not wonder that persons are dissatisfied with their portion, who send out pride and fancy to explore it; who dwell on the dark side of their condition only, and never look at the bright one; and

suffer the impression of a single trial to render them insensible to the claims of a thousand comforts.

And we leave those whom Jude calls “murmurers and complainers;” or, as the word is, blasphemers of their lot. Haman goes home to his wife, and states his greatness; but adds, “ Yet all this availeth me nothing, so long as Mordecai the Jew sitteth at the king’s gate.” Ahab, in a palace, cannot eat and drink; and turns sick; and takes to his bed; because one of his subjects will not sell him a few yards of garden ground. One is mopish and melancholy because he cannot get a particular place or office. Another is sour or spiteful because all the neighbourhood will not bend to his humour, or think him so great a man as he imagines himself to be.—We do not wish the cravings of such groaners to be indulged; it would only carry them the further still from contentment. But we pray that they may exchange “the sorrow of the world which worketh death,” for that “godly sorrow which worketh repentance unto life, and needeth not to be repented of.”

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## AUGUST 10.—MORNING.

“The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage.” PSALM XVI. 6.

WE may put this acknowledgment into the mouth of AN INHABITANT OF THIS FAVOURED COUNTRY.

People are naturally attached to a land in which they were born, and brought up, and with which all their earliest recollections and feelings are associated. It has pleasures and charms for them that others know

not of. And who would be cruel enough to deprive them of their preference? and make them miserable by comparison? Rather, who would not rejoice that there is no region so absolutely dreary and barren as to have no flowers and attractions scattered over it by the kindness of Providence, to bind them to their native soil, and to make it painful to leave their own country and their father's house?

Yet we need not confound things that differ. It would be the strangest inconsideration and ingratitude, were we, as Englishmen, to be unaffected with the advantages we enjoy in this highly distinguished and indulged country. We refer not to our extensive dominion, far surpassing the Roman world, having more than sixty millions under our sway, in one part of our dominion only. Neither do we admire the manner in which our dominion has sometimes been acquired and enlarged; though we are persuaded the conquerors will prove blessings to the conquered. In a thousand instances we are far from faultless. But,

“England, with all thy faults, I love thee still!”

And how much is there, whatever view I take, to induce the acknowledgment, “The lines are fallen to me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage!” Let me think of our insular situation, in consequence of which we are open to commerce; guarded from invasion; and even in war itself know so little of its ravages, never hearing the confused noise of warriors, or seeing garments rolled in blood. Let me think of the temperature of our atmosphere, in which we are not frozen to statues, nor dissolved in heat. Let me think of our freedom from tornadoes, hurricanes,

earthquakes, pestilences. Let me think of a country where the seasons regularly return and melt into each other—where are the sweet interchanges of hill and vale, and wood and lawn—where the pastures are clothed with flocks and herds—where the fields and valleys stand thick with corn—where we are fed with the finest of the wheat. Let me think of a country whose merchants are princes, and whose traffickers are the honourable of the earth—a country ennobled by the zeal of patriots, enriched by the blood of martyrs, endeared and sacred by the dust of a pious multitude without number—a country illustrious by every kind of genius and by every improvement in science and in art—a country in whose well-balanced Constitution are blended the advantages of monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy, without their defects—a country whose government is equally averse to tyranny and anarchy; where none are above law and none below it; where Liberty has so long fixed her abode; where religious opinions produce no civil disabilities; where all persecution is excluded; and where every man sits under his own vine and fig tree, and none can make him afraid. Let me think of a country where charity and compassion reign not only in numberless personal acts, but in a thousand institutions to meet every kind of distress, and lessen the sum of human woe. Let me think of a country possessing not only so many natural, intellectual, civil, and social advantages, but so many moral and religious privileges; where not only the darkness of paganism, but of superstition, is past, and the true light shineth; where the Scriptures are found in our own language, and all are allowed to read them, and

able to procure them ; where the word of life is preached, and we can hear the joyful sound of the truth as it is in Jesus ; where the Gospel of Christ is not only spreading widely among ourselves, but zealous and persevering efforts are making by individuals and communities to convey it to others—Where shall I end ? And can I glance at all this, and not say “ It is a good land which the Lord our God hath given us ”? Ought I not not to be thankful to him who determines the bounds of my habitation, and performeth all things for me ? Ought I not to bear with patience and cheerfulness a few difficulties and trials inseparable from a condition so favoured and indulged ? Ought I not to be concerned to improve my privileges, and to fear the danger arising from so great a responsibility ? Where much is given, will not much be required ? Was not Capernaum that was exalted unto heaven thrust down to hell ? Did not God say to the Jews, You only have I known of all the families of the earth ; therefore you will I punish ? And ought I not to *dwell* in the land, and to do all in my power to promote the righteousness which exalteth a nation ? And should not I pray for its safety, and peace, and prosperity—“ Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children. And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us : and establish thou the work of our hands upon us ; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it ”?

## AUGUST 10.—EVENING.

"The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage." PSALM xvi. 6.

We may put this acknowledgment into the mouth of a CHRISTIAN WITH REGARD TO HIS SPIRITUAL CONDITION.

Read the preceding verse: "The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup: thou maintainest my lot." What wonder then that the possessor should exclaim, "The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage"?

He uses but one word in describing his estate: but it is the most comprehensive. Had he written volumes, and enumerated all the treasures of heaven, and earth, and sea, he would have said less, and to far less purpose, than in saying, "The *Lord* is the portion of mine inheritance." The greater includes the less. If *He* be *mine*, what is the substance of my portion but his fulness? and the measure of my portion but his immensity? and the duration of my portion but his eternity? Yet this is the truth of the case: in the everlasting covenant ordered in all things and sure, he has been pleased to make over himself to his people, with all he is, and all he has. "I will be thy God. I will pardon thy sins. I will sanctify thy nature. I will supply all thy need. I will be light to thy darkness. I will be strength to thy weakness. I will bless thy bread and thy water. All my ways towards thee shall be mercy and truth. All things shall work together for thy good. I will guide

thee with my counsel, and afterward receive thee to glory."

This is no more than the meanest Christian may claim and exult in. *Meanest* did we say? We retract the term. A Christian may be afflicted and poor; but he cannot be mean—He is one of the excellent of the earth, of whom the world is not worthy. Let the rich and the great bring together all their claims, and make their boast; the *poorest* Christian beggars them all; for he can say, “God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.” And he ought to preserve a sense of this in his mind. He ought to live nobly. He ought to feel contentedly in whatsoever state he is. He ought not to envy others their good things; nor sink, like others, under losses and trials. When their lamps are put out, they are in utter darkness; but the Sun of righteousness arises upon him. When their vessels are broken, all their comforts are gone; but he has the fountain of living waters—They have no God; but “The Lord is the portion of his inheritance.”

If from viewing his state essentially he examines it comparatively, he will have fresh reason to exclaim, “The lines are fallen to me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage.” For what should we value a heritage? We should commend it for *healthfulness*. No heritage would be deemed pleasant and goodly that was injurious to health, without which we can relish nothing. The apprehension of losing this all-important blessing would alone induce us to resign any situation, unless we were compelled to remain in it. But such is the Christian’s heritage, that all those who have lived upon it, however disordered before,

have been restored to a miracle, and each of them could say, I am a wonder unto many. We should commend it for *fertility*. Hence Moses extols Canaan as a land flowing with milk and honey, and in which there was no scarceness. In like manner, he says of Joseph; “Blessed of the Lord be his land, for the precious things of heaven, for the dew, and for the deep that coucheth beneath, and for the precious fruits brought forth by the sun, and for the precious things put forth by the moon, and for the chief things of the ancient mountains, and for the precious things of the lasting hills.” No earthly inheritance can yield the possessor every thing he wants; but God’s riches in glory, by Christ Jesus, can supply all the Christian’s need. We should commend it for *safety*. The best heritage would fetch little that had no defence, but was open to invasion and injury. There is nothing that adds so much to the enjoyment of a possession as a sense of security: sitting under our own vine and fig tree, and none making us afraid. Upon all the Christian’s glory there is a defence. His soul dwells at ease: and he is in quiet from the fear of evil. An heritage would not be deemed pleasant or goodly if cut off from the *privilege of intercourse*. Christians have the communion of saints. There is an open and constant communication between them and heaven. Their fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.

Blessed are the people that are in such a case: yea, happy is the people whose God is the Lord.

## AUGUST 11.—MORNING.

"He must increase, but I must decrease." JOHN iii. 30.

THIS was spoken of the Redeemer, by his fore runner John. And it is not to be considered as the language of complaint, or sullen acquiescence—as if he would say, "I dislike it; but it is unavoidable. It is my grief; and I must bear it." No. It was as agreeable to his feelings, as it was firm in his belief. And it shewed a fine and a noble soul in John. The spirit that is in us lusteth to envy. We love something distinguishing, and therefore exclusive. We wish to rise, even by the depression of others. It is trying, even to a good man, to withdraw, and see a successor filling his place better than himself, and, as the honours he has worn are transferred to another, to say, "He must increase, but I must decrease." It is not an easy thing to go down well; or for a setting star to exult in a rising sun.

But it was thus with John. He knew his rank, and approved of his place. He was the servant, not the master. The friend, not the bridegroom—The Church was not married to him. "He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease."

What does he mean by this increase? Not an increase in his temporal condition. As he had been poor, so he was to continue. Many of his professed followers seek great things to themselves: but we

may judge of his estimation of them by his choice; for they were all within his reach. But though he had a kingdom, it was not of this world. Nor is it by any kind of earthly condition and indulgence that he has characterized Christians, or raised their hope. He has nowhere engaged to make them rich in this world's good, but only rich in faith. He has nowhere told them that they shall be free from trouble, but only that in him they shall have peace.

The increase partly regards his personal ministry. Both John and Jesus were preachers and leaders. John's "course" was ending; but Jesus was only commencing his public work. John was going to lose his disciples; and Jesus to gain them; and to become a much more famous minister, by miracles, and clearness and grandeur of doctrine, and the permanency of his success. Indeed, we have no reason to believe that John ever preached after this. The end of his mission was answered. He was a voice; and, having made his proclamation, he was silenced. He was the morning star; and having ushered the Sun of righteousness in, he disappeared. He was the forerunner to introduce the Messiah; but the Messiah was now come, and verified, and acknowledged.

But it was the same as saying, Christianity must increase. Christianity was small at first; but it was to resemble the shining light, which begins with the dawn, but becomes perfect day. Or to be like the mustard-seed, which, however diminutive, grows the greatest among herbs, and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof. Or the portion of leaven, which, hid in the meal, continues to diffuse itself till the whole be lea-

vened. His doctrine was possessed only by himself for a time. He then communicated the secret to twelve; then to seventy. His followers, after this, were not numerous; and they consisted chiefly of the common people: for it was scornfully asked, "Have any of the rulers believed on him?" After various trials, the number of disciples in Jerusalem, previously to the descent of the Spirit, was about one hundred and twenty. Then three thousand were added in one day—and the Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved. Thus mightily grew the word of God, and prevailed. It soon spread beyond the bounds of Judæa, and reached the ends of the Roman world—the heralds thanking God, who always caused them to triumph in Christ, and made manifest the savour of his knowledge by them in every place. How much has his cause done since! And how is it expanding now!—But a vaster increase is yet to take place. His glory shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together. For now shall he be great to the ends of the earth. Such is the language of the Scripture; and nothing has yet taken place sufficient to fulfil it. It is therefore before us. We know that Heathenism, and Mahomedanism, and "the Man of Sin," shall be destroyed. And we know that the Jews shall look on him whom they have pierced—and if the casting them away was the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?

And there is no uncertainty here—it *must* be. The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. His death insures it. He has power over all flesh to accomplish it. Let those who love him, and are labouring to advance his cause, rejoice, and be encouraged—

*they cannot fail.* “His Name shall endure for ever: his Name shall be continued as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in him: all nations shall call him blessed. And blessed be his glorious Name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled with his glory; Amen, and Amen.”

## AUGUST 11.—EVENING.

“Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence.” PHIL. ii. 12.

“**T**HAT which is unsavoury cannot be eaten without salt.” And therefore, to render it palatable, we season it. When we are going to reprove a fault, or enforce a duty, we should, as much as possible, commend: for praise opens the mind, and prepares for the reception of rebuke or admonition. This wisdom the Apostle here displays. There was nothing in him like flattery; but, to introduce his most solemn charge, that they would work out their own salvation with fear and trembling, he applauds these Philippians for four things.

First. Their *obedience*. Belief, knowledge, profession, talk—every thing, is vain without this. The Gospel was made known for the obedience of faith—And these Philippians had “obeyed.”

Secondly. The *constancy* of their practice. Lot’s wife, at the angel’s command, left Sodom; but “she looked back.” The Galatians “did run well; but were hindered:” “they began in the Spirit, and ended in the flesh.” The goodness of Ephraim and Judah was like a morning cloud, and as the early dew that passeth away—But these Philippians had “always” obeyed.

Thirdly. The *increase* of their diligence and zeal. They had "much more" obeyed. They not only held on their way, but waxed stronger and stronger: not only continued, but always abounded in the work of the Lord. Nothing is more desirable or pleasing than to see this progression—It is like the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. It is like the springing of the earth: first the blade, then the ear, and after that the full corn in the ear.

Fourthly. The progress of their improvement *under disadvantages*. They had much more obeyed "in his absence" than in his presence—When he was no longer with them as a witness to observe; as an example to excite; as a preacher to warn and to animate them. Some attend the word and worship of God from the influence of a friend, or the authority of a father or a master. Jehoash followed the Lord all the days of Jehoiada, the high priest, who brought him up; but as soon as this eminent servant of God was dead, the young prince became an idolater, and even slew the prophet of the Lord. There are many who regard the eye of man more than the eye of God. It is well when our devotion springs from inward principle, and does not depend upon outward excitement: when we not only forsake, but abhor, that which is evil; and not only follow, but cleave to, that which is good. There is scarcely an individual, perhaps, that does not sometimes pray. But does he delight himself in the Almighty? Will he always call upon God? There are few but are afflicted, or alarmed, into occasional piety. But are we the same in health as in sickness? In the house as in the temple? On the week, as on the Sabbath?

What an immense loss must the Philippians have sustained in Paul's absence from them! Yet they obeyed much more in his absence than in his presence. Surely this shews that, when he left them, God did not leave them. It teaches us that God does not depend upon instruments, though he is pleased to make use of them. It proves that, by his own Spirit, he can make up for the want of any creature advantage. When, by persecution, the Church has been deprived of her pastors; or, by accident or disease, Christians have been destitute of the public ordinances of religion; they have seen his power and his glory as they have seen him in the sanctuary. The streams were gone; but the Fountain was near. And where the providence of God has denied the usual means of grace, we have known the sufferers to prosper in the divine life, even more than those who have enjoyed an affluence of privileges.

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#### AUGUST 12.—MORNING

"Sing unto the Lord, O ye saints of his, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness." Pa. xxx. 4.

It would be perfectly useless to call upon *others* to do this in their present state.

"None but the soul that feels his grace  
Can triumph in his holiness."

Since the Fall, this attribute, which renders God so amiable in himself, and which draws forth the highest praises of heaven, makes him unlovely to an apostate creature. There is nothing the sinner thinks of with so much dislike as a perfection that justifies all his

fears, and opposes all his inclinations and pursuits. What an enemy the world naturally is to the holiness of God, may be seen in the practice of the heathens. Among all the heroes they deified, they advanced none for those qualities which approached the most nearly to it; but frequently for passions the most remote from it; and, at best, only for some physical power, valued or useful in the concerns of this life. Esculapius was deified for his skill in curing diseases; Bacchus, for the use of the grape; Vulcan, for his operations in fire; Hercules, for his destroying monsters. But not one of them all was advanced to this honor for the virtue of holiness—as if this property was beneath their notice in the formation of a deity; or they loved a god better that had nothing to do with it.

It was upon this principle that they who are now saints “would” once themselves have “none of him;” and really said unto God, “Depart from us; we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.” Hence, if they loved the Sabbath, it was as a day of leisure and recreation; not as “the holy of the Lord.” Hence they disliked his people, as renewed, because they were images of this pure original.

What a blessed evidence is it in their favour, that they can now “glory in his holy Name;” and “sing and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness”! But such is the change they have experienced, that they *do* contemplate him with pleasure as holy in all his ways, and righteous in all his works. It is a relief, a satisfaction, to their minds, in every perplexity in nature or providence, that the Judge of all the earth must do right. They delight in the Law of God, which is holy, just, and good, after the

inward man. The Gospel appears to their minds glorious, "because therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith, that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." This attribute now smiles upon them. They have a vast interest in it. As he is holy, they can depend upon his truth, and are assured of the fulfilment of his word. They know that He who has said, I will abundantly pardon; I will never leave thee nor forsake thee; is a God that cannot lie. Yes, says the Christian, since he who loves me is purity itself, and his influence is almighty, he will sprinkle clean water upon me, and *I* shall be clean. He will destroy in me the sin which he infinitely hates. He will make me a *partaker* of his holiness, and render me meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.

But without this love to holiness we cannot see the kingdom of God. We are, both by Scripture and by the nature of the case, excluded for ever from his presence; which could only make us miserable. What fellowship hath light with darkness? What communion hath righteousness with unrighteousness?

Some talk of the less amiable views of the Supreme Being—yea, of the darker side of the Deity. And what side is this? The Scripture tells me: and—I believe it—I feel it—that "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all."

Therefore, thus saith the Lord: "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord which exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth; for in these things I delight, saith the Lord."

## AUGUST 12.—EVENING.

"They shall cry unto the Lord because of the oppressors, and he shall send them a saviour, and a great one." ISAIAH xix. 20.

LET us consider these words in the noblest exemplification of which they are susceptible; and let us remark what they say of the *saved*, and what they say of the *Saviour*.

What they say of the *saved*: "They shall cry unto the Lord because of the oppressors." The representation includes their *state*—They are oppressed, and their oppressors are worse enemies than any of the conquerors who have enslaved nations. They are more base, and vile, and cruel, and reduce their vassals to far greater wretchedness and ruin. And we cannot mistake who these tyrants are, when we know that "the son of God was manifested that he might destroy the works of the Devil," that he "might deliver us from this present evil world," that he might "turn every one of us away from our iniquities," that he might "save his people from their sins." It includes their *sensibility*. Many are unwilling to own their condition; and resemble the Jews, who, when our Lord spoke of making them free, exclaimed, "We were never in bondage to any man," though they had been captives to every neighbouring power, and were then a Roman province. But these are awakened to consider, and enlightened to see their deplorable estate. This is what divines call conviction of sin; and which commonly operates in the following order. The man first feels the effects of his sin. The prodigal began to be in

want: I here perish with hunger: I will arise. Then he feels the guilt of sin, and learns that whatever miseries he has brought upon himself here, they are only the beginnings of sorrow, and a small part of his desert. The soul that sinneth it shall die. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hand of the living God. Who can dwell with everlasting burnings? At last he becomes sensible of the pollution of sin, as the defilement of the soul, and as rendering him unfit for communion with a holy God—"Behold, I am vile: wherefore I abhor myself, repenting in dust and ashes." It includes also their *disposition*— "They cry unto the Lord" for relief and deliverance. Conviction of sin always issues in earnest prayer: and such prayer cannot be in vain—

"He shall send them a Saviour"—And what is said of *him*? A single distinction is given him: but how much does it contain! and how suitable, how necessary is it to meet our wants! Our case is beyond expression difficult; yea, it is desperate in itself, and also with regard to "the help of men and angels joined." Every kind of saviour therefore will not do for us; he must be mighty to save: and our help is laid on one that is mighty—He shall send them a Saviour: "*and a great one.*" He is so in four respects. A great one if we consider the dignity of his person. The grandest titles are not withholden from him in the Scriptures of truth. There he is not only the child born, and the son given, but the mighty God. There he is not only the man and the sufferer, but the maker of all things: "all things were created by him and for him." Can we think too highly of such a Saviour? Can we confide in him too con-

fidently? Can our interests ever fail in such hands? "I know," says Paul, "whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day."

A great one if we consider the immensity of the number he saves. These have been commonly few compared with their contemporaries; yet the aggregate of them from the beginning is a countless multitude. But when we look to the future, we read of the nations of them that are saved. It is said, he shall sprinkle many nations. Yea, all nations shall be blessed in him: all flesh shall see the salvation of God.

A great one if we consider the vastness of the deliverance he achieves. It is called "so great salvation:" inexpressibly, inconceivably great. What are all other salutations compared with this? They free us from some evils, this saves us from all evil. They confer some advantages, this secures every advantage. They are temporal, this is eternal; "Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation; they shall not be ashamed or confounded, world without end."

A great one if we consider that his sufficiency reaches beyond every extremity. Hence, says the Apostle, "He is able to save unto the uttermost." His blood cleanses from the greatest guilt. His grace can enlighten the darkest understanding, and soften the hardest heart, and subdue the most rebellious will—Nothing is too hard for the Lord.

But some may be ready to say, you need not enlarge here, we do not question his ability—but his readiness to save. Is he a *willing* Saviour? In

answer to this, we observe, First, That the assurance of his ability is an implication of his willingness: for it would be useless, it would be worse than useless—it would tantalize and torment us, were we informed that our perishing condition was within the compass of his power, but not within the reach of his pity. And, Secondly, the sacred writers would think his compassion was taken for granted, and that no one could possibly doubt the inclination of his heart. Who, without our solicitation, remembered us in our low estate, and said, Deliver from going down into the pit, I have found a ransom? Who took upon him flesh and blood, and came into the world to save sinners? Who, when rich, for our sakes became poor? Who died for the ungodly? Who has said, and confirmed it by his oath, by his blood, and by every instance of his conduct, "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out?"—"Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief."

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## AUGUST 13.—MORNING.

"And David said, Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake?"

2 SAM. ix. 1.

LET me not pass this without remark.

—See the low estate of Saul's house! He had a very numerous family, sufficient to have replenished a country; and yet it was now so reduced, dispersed, concealed, or unknown, that it was necessary to inquire whether any remains of it were left. So God setteth the solitary in families. Some houses, distin-

guished by their wealth and nobility, fall into indigence and obscurity; while others are completely terminated, their last branch having withered in the dust. “Their inward thought is, that their houses shall continue for ever, and their dwelling-places to all generations; they call their lands after their own names. Nevertheless man being in honour abideth not: he is like the beasts that perish.” “Be not thou afraid when one is made rich, when the glory of his house is increased.” Vanity of vanities! saith the Preacher—all is vanity!

See a fine instance of the forgiveness of injuries. Saul had been David's sworn foe; and had pursued him to the last with remorseless malignity. Yet while he was alive, David never took an advantage to injure him, when he had him completely in his power. And when he died, he mourned over him; and eulogized him, far beyond his desert. And, years after, he inquired whether any of his family was left—not to cut them off, lest they should disturb his government—or to punish the sins of the father upon the children. Thus Athaliah arose, and destroyed all the seed royal. Thus Abimelech would leave none remaining of his father's house, and slew his brethren, the sons of Jerubbaal, being threescore and ten persons, upon one stone—And the same barbarous exterminations have been always practised in the East—But David asks if any is left, to “shew him kindness.” Let us learn from hence, not to avenge ourselves; but rather to give place unto wrath. A greater than David has said, “Love your enemies; bless them that curse you.” And he perfectly exemplified his own command: “When re

viled, he reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not;” but prayed, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.”

We have here *a proof of real and refined affection*—That I may shew him kindness, “for Jonathan’s sake.” Jonathan had been his bosom friend; and his open and generous conduct had justly endeared him to David. Steadiness of attachment is to be admired. Thy own friend, and thy father’s friend, forsake not. A friend is born for adversity; and loveth at all times: and his regard will extend beyond the individual, to his connexions and offspring. God himself acts upon this principle; and tells us that the children of his servant shall continue, and that the generation of the upright shall be blessed. “I have been young,” says David, “and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.” And shall not we act upon the same principle in another case? Who remembered us in our low estate? Who, when rich, for our sakes became poor? Who died, that we might live? He was received up into glory; and is no more in the world—But are there none left of *his* family who stand in need of our assistance? Let us pity and relieve them. Whatever we do unto one of the least of all these, he will esteem as done unto himself.

It was honourable in David not to wait to be addressed, but endeavour to search out the object. We are to devise liberal things; and not only to seize, but to seek opportunities of doing good. The most needy and deserving are generally the least clamorous; and, like the stricken deer, retire, and bleed alone. Such

we must seek after. We should not wait for the enforcement of claims, if conscience tells us they are due. Some, we fear, would never pay a debt, if they thought the creditor had forgotten it. But justice is the rule of our duty.

—We can go no further in our praise of David. Surely his kindness loses somewhat of its excellency in its *lateness*. Mephibosheth was five years old when David ascended the throne; and was now married, and had a son. Thus a considerable number of years must have elapsed since God had delivered David out of all his adversity—He therefore (though better late than never) should have made this inquiry much earlier. What shall we say to this? We ought to make the best of every thing, especially in the conduct of great and good men. But none of them are faultless. And the sacred writers always shew their impartiality. They always record things just as they occurred, regardless of consequences: their only aim is truth. It has been said, in exculpation of David, that he was so much engaged in war, and pressed with such a multiplicity of engagements! There was a truth in this; but it does not entirely excuse him. He had entered into covenant with Jonathan; and should immediately have shewn his seed “the kindness of God:” that is, the kindness which he had sworn in his presence to exercise. Let us take heed that indulgence does not harden the heart: and when we prosper, let us watch and pray, lest we enter into temptation. The prosperity of fools destroys them. And the prosperity of wise men commonly injures them. As people rise in the world, they lose their recollection. The chief

butler did not remember Joseph, but forgat him—  
Lord, what is man !

In all things Jesus has the pre-eminence. He remembered us as soon as he came into his kingdom. And, though he passed into the heavens, he is still touched with the feeling of our infirmities.

## AUGUST 13.—EVENING.

"And David said unto him, Fear not: for I will surely shew thee kindness for Jonathan thy father's sake, and will restore thee all the land of Saul thy father; and thou shalt eat bread at my table continually. And he bowed himself, and said, What is thy servant, that thou shouldest look upon such a dead dog as I am?" 2 SAM. ix. 7, 8.

DAVID had inquired whether there was any left of the house of Saul, that he might shew him kindness for Jonathan's sake. Upon which, Ziba, an old retainer in Saul's family, said unto the king, "Jonathan has yet a son, which is lame on his feet." This lameness was occasioned by an accident, in consequence of the battle of Gilboa, by which his grandfather and his father were both slain. The nurse, not only from the terror such an event naturally inspires, but also from knowing that Mephibosheth was now the heir apparent to the throne, and that the victors would eagerly seek to apprehend him, to secure and conceal her precious charge, took him up and fled; but fell, and crippled him for life. To how many perils are children exposed in their resting! and how thankful should we feel to the providence of God, if we have escaped them!

Yet, instead of pitying Mephibosheth, we ought rather to congratulate him on this affliction. In the

earlier stages of society corporeal accomplishments are much rated; and had not Mephibosheth been thus disfigured and dismembered, the adherents of Saul's house would probably, as he was the next heir, have proclaimed *him*, instead of his uncle Ishboseth—and then it is most likely he would have been murdered, as *he* was. Who knows what is good for a man in this vain life? And who knows what is evil? How often have we deprecated things for which we have afterwards been thankful! How much do we owe to the disappointments of life! What dangers have ill health, or reduced substance, prevented!

Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take!  
The clouds ye so much dread  
Are big with mercy, and shall break  
In blessings on your head."

—“And the king said, Where is he? And Ziba said, Behold, he is in the house of Machir, the son of Ammiel, in Lo-debar.” Here, probably, resided in obscurity his mother’s relations: and here he himself was forgotten, like a dead man out of mind. Machir, with whom he dwelt, seems to have been a noble, generous man, who took charge of Mephibosheth from pity for one born to honour, and the son of so excellent a father; and not from any disaffection to David. Yea, we afterward find him equally kind to David; and furnishing him with every refreshment when he was driven an exile into his neighbourhood, by the rebellion of Absalom. And may not David’s kindness to Mephibosheth at this time have induced Machir the more promptly and extensively to exert himself in favour of David in his subsequent distress? If so, it says, “Give a portion to

seven, and also to eight; for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth." The aid we impart to-day, we may want to-morrow. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.

The king sent and fetched him. And observe his introduction at Court—When he was come unto David, he fell on his face, and did reverence. David had done the very same to this cripple's father a few years before, bowing himself three times to the earth. What changes take place in the conditions of men! David had too reflective a mind not to think of this. He had probably never seen Mephibosheth before, though he was born about the time of his intimacy with his beloved father. The first thing I suppose he would look for in his features, would be the image of Jonathan. David had too much sensibility not to be impressed with the affecting scene. Feeling is always brief in expression—He utters only one word: but the manner in which he pronounced it said every thing—And David said, *Mephibosheth!* It was the language of surprise, tenderness, and endearment.

—Why was he afraid of David? It is not probable that he apprehended any danger from him. But he had been living in the country, and in privacy, from a child. And it is no unusual thing for a stranger to be intimidated at the presence of a very superior and extraordinary man. Madame de Staël, though accustomed to the highest society, and endued with such powers of address and conversation, says she was breathless in the company of the late Emperor of France; and could never rise above this prostration of mind. But David was a greater man, and as great a warrior, considering the age in which he

lived. Seeing the depression of his countenance, and his tremour;

—David said to him, “Fear not: for I will surely shew thee kindness for Jonathan’s sake”—and gave him the assurance of two things. First. Upon the suppression of Ishbosheth’s faction, Saul’s estate had been confiscated to the crown: this he promises to give him, with all its future revenues. And secondly. He assigns him a residence in his palace, and a constant access to himself. I will restore thee all the land of Saul thy father; and thou shalt eat bread at my table continually.

And how did Mephibosheth receive these honours? He was not one of those who take every favour as a debt, and imagine their friends are only doing their duty; and very imperfectly, too, perhaps; in every kindness they shew them—But he exclaims, “What is thy servant, that thou shouldest look upon such a dead dog as I am?” A dog is fitter to be under the table, than at the side of it; and a dead dog is fitter for the ditch, than the palace—It was a strong, proverbial expression, used to signify how mean, and base, and unworthy, and unqualified, he deemed himself. But if *he* received these benefits from David with so much thankfulness and humility, how ought *we* to feel under those blessings which God bestows upon us? And here let me ask three questions.

And first—not to dwell on the ordinary bounties of his providence: Has he not remembered us in our low estate? Has he not sought and saved our souls? Has he not restored our forfeited inheritance? Has he not given us a name and a place in his house, that we may eat and drink at his table in his kingdom?

Secondly. And are not the blessings he has conferred upon us infinitely greater than those Mephibosheth received from David? It might seem an immense thing, to a worldly mind, to be fetched out of distant obscurity; and enriched with a royal demesne; and allowed to live at a splendid court. But Mephibosheth, perhaps, was not even so happy as before; and for whatever purposes he valued his elevation, he soon left it: and found that he had set his eyes on that which is not. But we are blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. Our dignities and enjoyments yield the most perfect satisfaction. And they will endure for ever.

Thirdly. And how much less reason had we to look for such favours from God, than Mephibosheth had to expect such bestowments from David! He was David's fellow-creature; and he had a claim founded in a community of nature. He was the son of an intimate friend, to whom he was under obligation. He was also a relation; being the child of his brother-in-law. Though a sufferer, he was innocent, and had always conducted himself properly towards David.

—But, Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man, that thou visitest him? We were strangers—enemies by wicked works—unworthy of the least of all his mercies—deserving that his wrath should come upon us as the children of disobedience. What then ought to be our self-abasement? our gratitude? But where are they? Are they urging us to exclaim, Not unto us, O Lord; not unto us!—By thy grace we are what we are!

Are they inducing us to utter abundantly the memory of his great goodness; and recommend him all the day long to others? Are they constraining us, by his mercies, to present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable, which is our reasonable service?

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## AUGUST 14.—MORNING.

"And Moses built an altar, and called the name of it JEHOVAH-nissi." EXOD. xvii. 15.

IT was upon the defeat of Amalek and his people that Moses built this altar for sacrifice and thanksgiving. But what is the import of the name he gave it; JEHOVAH-NISSI? The Lord my banner. A banner is a military flag, standard, or ensign, commonly coloured and figured, carried in war, and displayed to collect, regulate, and encourage the troops. It would be needless and absurd to run a parallel between a banner and God. It is enough to observe, that it is not only applied to him metaphorically, but by a figure of speech, which puts a part for the whole; and intends that he is every thing to his people in the character of warriors.

It therefore reminds us that the Christian life is a warfare. There is no image by which, in the Scriptures, it is more frequently expressed. And though it be called "a good warfare," it is the most serious and trying in which we can ever be engaged: and every partaker of divine grace can say, with Paul, "So fight I not as one that beateth the air." The persons and things of the present evil world, the armies of aliens in his own heart, and the principalities

ties, and powers, and spiritual wickednesses in high places, constrain him often to exclaim, "Lord, how are they increased that trouble me! Many are they that rise up against me. Many there be which say of my soul, there is no help for him in God." But the Lord is his banner! How full and significant is the language of Revelation! Not only, says David, does he enlighten and save me, but "the Lord is my light and my salvation." Not only, says the Church, does he aid and inspire me, but "the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song." A true Israelite not only says, "Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee, that it may be displayed because of the truth;" but my banner is Divine—is Deity itself: JEHOVAH-NISSI! We acknowledge and honour him as such four ways.

First, by voluntarily and inflexibly adhering to him as our Leader and Commander. "The Lord is my banner." I disclaim every other chief. I bring all my resources into his service. I am ready to stand or fall with him—His cause is my cause; and his enemies my enemies. If others *desert*, I will cleave to him with purpose of heart. I will follow him in all changes, and whithersoever he goeth. He shall choose my station, and shew me where I shall contend; whether in private or in public life; whether with the evils of prosperity or adversity—I am not at my own disposal—Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?

Secondly, by confessing him the Author of every success with which we have been crowned. It is no easy thing when we succeed to beat off all arrogance and self-glorying. We love to sacrifice to our own

wisdom and our own strength. How much has God to do to hide pride from us! The army of Gideon must be reduced from more than thirty thousand to four hundred men, and these be armed only with lamps and pitchers, "lest Israel vaunt themselves;" and to compel them to exclaim, "*His* right hand and his holy arm have gotten *him* the victory." The most becoming state of mind we can be in is to feel that we are nothing, and that God is all in all. And to this the Christian will be brought, and be ready to lay down all his honours at his feet. "I look back and see many who have become a prey to their enemies, who once promised fairer than I have ever done. How is it that I have stood in the evil day; and yet stand? Not unto me, O Lord, not unto me. By thee I have run through a troop; and by my God have I leaped over a wall. Thou hast also given me the shield of thy salvation; and thy right hand hath holden me up, and thy gentleness hath made me great. Thou hast enlarged my steps under me, that my feet did not slip. For thou hast girded me with strength unto the battle; thou hast subdued under me those that rose up against me. Bless the Lord, O my soul."

Thirdly, by our courageously trusting in him to enable us to overcome in every future conflict. Knowing the vast, the infinite consequences depending on the issue of the war, it would be awfully discouraging and depressing to the Christian to fight uncertainly. But he does not, at least he should not, he need not. There is a holy kind of confidence and triumph, more than allowed him, which nothing should shake. It is founded not in his own skill and

resources, but in the perfections and engagements of his covenant God. Has he not said, No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper? Has he not said, Thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee, and thou shalt tread upon their high places? My soul shall make her boast in the Lord. In myself I am very unequal to the work; but I am not alone. The Lord is on my side. I am nothing compared with my foes; but they are nothing, compared with the Lord of hosts. Infinitely greater is he that is for me than all that are against me. He will furnish me with supplies. He will well arm me for the field. He will teach my hands to war, and my fingers to fight. He will renew my strength, and make my way prosperous. Though a worm, I shall thresh the mountains. In all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

Fourthly, by looking to him for the remuneration of victory at last. The soldier warreth in hope; and it is not wrong for the Christian, like Moses, to have respect unto the recompense of the reward. The reward is indeed of grace; but it is a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. And while we look for it as the fruit of his mercy, we can claim it on the ground of his truth; for he has said, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." "He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son."

JEHOVAH-NISSI!

## AUGUST 14.—EVENING.

—“Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.” GEN. xv. 1.

OUR misery or happiness depends upon the relation in which God stands to us. What an adversary must he be, who is every where present, who is almighty, who has the command of every creature, and the direction of every event! Have we an arm like God, or can we thunder with a voice like his? If he be against us, who can be for us? And if he be for us, who can be against us? Blessed are the people whose hope the *Lord* is; and who can claim *Him* as their helper, their guide, their guard, the strength of their heart, their portion for ever—their shield, and their exceeding great reward—“Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation.”

“Fear not, Abram.” But had Abram expressed any fear? God seeth the state of the mind. He knows the apprehensions which his people feel, and are ashamed to utter; and he provides for their relief; and from the remedy we may always infallibly infer the disease. Abram feared the presence of evil—Therefore says God, “I am thy shield.” And he feared the absence of good—and therefore says God, “I am thy exceeding great reward.” But what is this to us? Every thing. God is the same in all ages; and they that be of faith are blest with faithful Abram. They also have their fears. But are they exposed? Do they live in the midst of dangers? Are they conscious of inability to defend themselves? They are not defenceless. Their defence is of God

—their defence is God. He is interposed between them and all evil—“*I am thy shield*”—a shield too solid for any weapon to penetrate; and so capacious as to leave no valued and endeared interest uncovered. The truth of this fact constitutes their security; but the belief of it creates their confidence; and it should be their concern to realize and apply it by faith; that their souls may dwell at ease; and be in quiet from the fear of evil.

But do they feel not only dangers which require a powerful preserver, but exigencies which call for a munificent benefactor? Let these exigencies be as numerous and as great as they may, their sufficiency is of God—“*I am thy exceeding great reward*.” The language of the Scripture is peculiarly strong. David does not say, The Lord enlightens and defends me; but the Lord is my Light and my salvation. Isaiah does not say, Thy God, thy glorifier; but thy God, thy glory. And the Lord does not say here, I will reward thee, but I am thy reward. The meaning, however, is not so much, I will recompense thee for whatever thou doest for me; as I will supply all thy need: only in the way of condescension he calls these bestowments by a word which would seem to intimate as if we deserved or earned them. But we must not suffer his glory to be injured by his goodness. A creature can never merit any thing from his Creator. A sinner only deserves punishment. A Christian will acknowledge that he is not worthy of the least of God’s mercies—if a reward be of grace, it is a free benefaction, whatever service it may be connected with. Hence the vastness of the good—not only thy reward, but thy great, thy exceeding great re-

ward; surpassing all example, all representation, all conception. We therefore never need be afraid of the participation of others; for there is enough, and to spare. And we may give full scope to our own desires and hopes. Whatever spiritual wisdom, or strength, or comfort, we need, we are commanded to ask and receive, that our joy may be full.

In temporal things, too, we should remember, that the silver and the gold are his. We should learn, in whatsoever state we are, therewith to be content; assured that if any wish be denied us, it is from wisdom in our generous Friend, and not from a want of love, or a deficiency in his resources. Let us honour him, by living on his fulness in the failure of every creature succour. When Paulinus heard of the sacking of Nola by the Goths, and the destruction of all his property, he lifted up his eyes and said, "Thou knowest where my treasure has long been." And what says the Church? "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation."

Let us think of the full possession and enjoyment of our supreme good. There is a medium here between impatience and indifference. When a Christian is in a proper frame of mind, he will be content to stay, if the pleasure of God requires it; but he will be ready to go. "What is my condition here, but a vale of tears, a wilderness of briars and thorns, an enemy's country? I cannot pray without distractions. I

cannot sing without some jarring notes. When I would do good, evil is present with me. How partial always, and how often interrupted, is my communion with God! How remotely do I now feel from that state, in which I shall behold his face in righteousness, and be for ever with the Lord!"—

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AUGUST 15.—MORNING.

"Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Sion; and unto thee shall the vow be performed." Ps. lxxv. 1.

HERE we have the Church's praise, and the Church's vow: the suspension of the one; and the fulfilment of the other.

In general, God waits for our praise. And how slow and reluctant are we in rendering it! And how seldom, at last, do we render according to the benefit done unto us! Here praise waits in Sion for him. The meaning is, that the deliverance or blessing which they were in need of had not arrived but they were looking for it—They had their harp in their hand, ready to strike up a song of thanksgiving; but delay kept them *silent*. Praise waited, therefore, because the Church waited.

And this is no unusual thing, First, as to their spiritual experience. They wish to be able to view him as the strength of their heart and their portion for ever; and to claim all the exceeding great and precious promises as their own. But they are doubtful and uncertain; yea, they often exclude themselves from all part and lot in the matter. Now we cannot praise him for what we think he has not done

for us or given to us; but only for what he has. If, therefore, he has forgiven, and accepted us, the acknowledgment of the blessing requires the knowledge of it. Yet how many are in a state of anxiety, waiting for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning; and praying, Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation! And,

Secondly, as to providential dispensations. How long was it, even after David had been anointed by Samuel, before he was established on the throne! How long did Joseph wait, with every prospect growing darker, before his prophetic dreams were accomplished! And so Abraham, only "after he had patiently endured, obtained the promise." God keeps back, till self-despair and the failure of creature confidence have spread a dark ground, on which his glory *must* be seen. He loves to astonish as well as succour. He will convince us in future difficulties that he is able to do for us exceeding abundantly above all we can ask or think. Therefore, at evening time it is light: and he turneth the shadow of death into the morning.

Here, however, let it be observed, that Christians cannot be ever *entirely* silent. They have always much to praise God for. Whatever be their present condition—it might have been much worse—yea, in every thing they are to give thanks. Nor will they be silent *long*. The vision is only for an appointed time. Yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. And they need not be silent *at all* if they have faith in God: for faith can see the certainty of the thing before it takes place; and cause us always to triumph in Christ, while yet the warfare is not actually accomplished.

If hope deferred maketh the heart sick, when it cometh it is a tree of life. Therefore says the Church, "Unto thee shall the vow be performed." The vow means, their solemn engagement to praise him when the deliverance or blessing arrived. "If he appears to my joy, I will give him the glory that is due unto his Name—witness my vow." We do not always admire vows. They often ensnare the soul, and give the enemy an advantage over us. And Christians, as they advance in self-knowledge, are commonly more disposed to pray to God, than to stipulate with him. It is a useful hint which Cowper gives us—

"Beware of Peter's word,  
Nor confidently say,  
I never will deny thee, Lord ;  
But, Grant I never may."

Yet vows, in some cases, may be useful. They may prove as a kind of fence to the field, or hem to the garment. They may serve to remind us when we forget; and to humble us when we fail. But two things should be always observed. The first is, that they be formed in an entire dependence upon divine grace. "By thee only will we make mention of thy Name." "Through God we shall do valiantly."

The second is, that when we have made them, we should be concerned to fulfil them. "When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed. Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay." Yet how often have men bound themselves when they

were in danger, sickness, and affliction; and forgetting, or violating their vow, have turned again to folly! Even Jacob, after all his solemn covenanting with God, in the prospect of his journey, was awfully remiss upon his return; till, divinely rebuked, he said,—“Let us arise, and go up to Beth-el: and I will make there an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went.” Hannah was more exemplary. She had vowed that, if her prayer was answered, she would give her son to the Lord as long as he lived. The surrender was painful: but as soon as she had weaned him, she took him to Shiloh, and brought him to Eli: “And she said, O my lord, as thy soul liveth, my lord, I am the woman that stood by thee here, praying unto the Lord. For this child I prayed; and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of him: therefore also I have lent him to the Lord; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the Lord.”—“Well done, thou good and faithful servant.”

## AUGUST 15.—EVENING.

“If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established.”

ISAIAH viii. 9.

THIS closes the address of Isaiah to Ahaz and his people, on a very interesting occasion. It was this:—Rezin, king of Syria, and Pekah, king of Israel, had confederated together to invade and destroy Judah. They had begun their march, and were spreading desolation and terror: and when Ahaz heard, “his heart was moved, and the heart of his people, as the trees of the wood are moved with the

wind." The figure is uncommonly expressive, and shews the restlessness and bendings of their minds under the violence of fear. Isaiah was ordered to go and encourage him, not for his own sake, for he was a very wicked prince, but for the sake of the house of David. Two things are observable. First, he was to take along with him his son Shear-jashub. The reason for this does not appear; unless there was a reference to the import of his name, which signified, a remnant shall return. Secondly, the very spot is specified where he should meet Ahaz: "At the end of the conduit of the upper pool in the high way of the Fuller's Field." Perhaps he was there to order the water-works, so as to secure them from the enemy; or perhaps he was to be there passing by accidentally. If so, we see that occurrences and movements the most minute and contingent with regard to us, lie open to God's view, and the greatest consequences hinge upon them.

But what was he to say to him? "Take heed, and be quiet; fear not, neither be fainthearted for the two tails of these smoking firebrands, for the fierce anger of Rezin with Syria, and of the son of Remaliah. Because Syria, Ephraim, and the son of Remaliah, have taken evil counsel against thee, saying, Let us go up against Judah and vex it, and let us make a breach therein for us, and set a king in the midst of it, even the son of Tabeal: Thus saith the Lord God, It shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass." Yea, the assurance goes on to announce not only that the designs of these adversaries should be defeated, but that they themselves would be speedily destroyed. All this, however, is closed

with a very significant reflection: "If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established."

This betrays an apprehension that the message was not likely to be readily and firmly credited—Such fools, and so slow of heart are we to believe all that the prophets have spoken! It also shews that God does not regard us as merely passive in religion. We are not under his influence like timber under the saw, the chisel, and plane, unconscious and inactive. He does not work upon us, but in us; and he works in us to will and to do. What he does for us, he does also by us. Neither is his operation like the agency of a charm, whose process no one can explain, and during which the patient may as well sleep as wake. If we are taught, we must understand and receive: we are not carried, but led into all truth. If he blesses us, he stirs us up to value and seek after his favours; and the asking is as necessary as the giving—yea, the one is the medium of the other. •

It might seem here as if faith was in our own power. It is not so in every respect; and it is not so in any respect as to nature. But what is impossible to nature is possible to grace. Without Christ we can do nothing; but through his strengthening of us we can do all things. And therefore as his grace is sufficient for us, and attainable by us, we are commanded to be filled with the Spirit: and he said to Thomas, Be not faithless, but believing; and he said to his disciples, "Have faith in God;" and he upbraided them for their unbelief.

But the principal thing is the essentiality of faith to religious stability: "If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established." There are three kinds

of stability in the Christian life. A stability of judgment—This refers to the truths of religion. A stability of practice—This refers to the duties of religion. And a stability of hope—This refers to the comforts of religion. Each of these faith is able to produce: but faith alone can produce them. Let us reflect upon all this—

And then we shall soon see enough to condemn and bewail in unbelief, not only as it dishonours God, but as it robs the soul, and leaves it stripped, wounded, and half dead; a prey to error, temptation, and grief. Who can imagine the aggregate of the good which it has prevented in our experience, ever since we have known God, or, rather, have been known of him? Oh what characters might we have been!—how firm, how free, how happy, how useful, how ennobled! And what has kept us back from all this honour? “An evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.” **LORD, INCREASE OUR FAITH.**

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AUGUST 16.—MORNING.

“Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast a hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money; that take, and give unto them, for me and thee.” MATT. xvii. 27.

How well was it foretold that his name should be called Wonderful!

What a surprising combination of attributes was displayed in him! Observe the case before us. Here, while we behold his penury and dependence—so that he did not possess wherewithal to pay the temple

tribute; we perceive his omniscience—so that in Peter's house he could pierce the waters of the sea, and discern a particular fish, and see what was in its body, and announce a piece of money there, and the very *name* of the coin. Surely the darkness hideth not from him; but the night shineth as the day. “Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight; but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.”

He who saw the *stater* in this fish sees what money we are in the possession of—and how we acquired it—and the way in which we are using it. He sees whether we are needlessly hoarding, or wastefully expending it. He sees whether we are making it our hope and confidence, or valuing it only as an instrument of lawful enjoyment, and of pious and benevolent use. He sees the responsibilities of the owner; and knows how he will feel when he shall be called to leave it; and when he will be required to give an account of it at the last day.

Here we also behold his power and dominion. He is Lord of all. The beasts of the field obey him. At his bidding, not a dog moves his tongue in the departure of the Israelites. At his command, the dumb ass speaks with man's voice, and rebukes the madness of the Prophet. The fowls of the air obey him—At his order the ravens bring Elijah bread and meat in the morning and the evening. The fishes of the sea obey him—At his command a great fish swallows the disobedient, and disembarks the penitent Jonah—and here, a fish, at his requirement, goes and takes up from the bottom of the sea a stater, and then goes and bites at Peter's hook, with this in his

maw! "All things are put under his feet; all sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field; the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the sea."

Could any thing be better adapted to encourage the confidence of the disciples in the kindness and all-sufficiency of his providence, when he was sending them forth as sheep among wolves, and without any known supplies to live upon? He commissioned the seventy to go in pairs through the whole country. But he sent them forth without purse, or scrip, or shoes. And they had, it would seem, many uneasy and distracting thoughts at the time. They did not indeed express them; but our Lord was aware of them, and remembered them. And when they came back, he brings them to their own recollection—"How came you to think that I, who employed you, should not provide for you?—Why did you doubt my inclination or my ability? When I sent you forth without purse and scrip, lacked ye any thing? And they said, Nothing, Lord."

Are you called to leave behind you those who seem to hang on your care? Hear this Saviour at your dying bed saying—"Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive: and let thy widows trust in me." "Oh fear the Lord, all ye his saints; for there is no want to them that fear him. The young lions do lack and suffer hunger; but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing."

## AUGUST 16.—EVENING.

"We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." 2 COR. v. 1.

SOME things in these words are very plain. Others may involve a little difficulty. The Apostle obviously intends the body when he speaks of "the earthly house of this tabernacle:" and nothing can be a juster representation of it. Man is not a machine; or a mere mass of organized matter. He has something more than flesh and blood. There is a spirit in man; and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding. What we see is not the agent, but only the instrument; not the inhabitant, but the dwelling. The body is called "an house" for its accommodation. The soul might have had another residence given it, and a very inferior one. Injured as the structure is by sin, it has enough of excellence yet in it to excite admiration, and induce us to say, "I am fearfully and wonderfully made." Galen, a physician atheistically inclined, after examining the body in the number, the perfection, and the exquisite adaptation of all the parts, was fully convinced of the being of God, and composed a beautiful hymn to his praise. No mechanism will bear a comparison with that of the animal economy. It would be much more reasonable to suppose that a watch made itself, than that the eye, in which there are such marks and proofs of design and contrivance, should be the effect of chance. But it is an "earthly" house—earthly in its composition; earthly in its support; earthly in its destina-

tion—"Dust thou art," says the sentence, and "unto dust shalt thou return." It is the case not only with the body of the peasant but of the prince—*His* breath goeth forth, *he* returneth to *his* dust." And so it must be with the relics of the most endeared connexion. The beauty of Sarah which had endangered kings, was soon despoiled of its charms, and after a wish, how natural! to keep even the lovely shrine a little longer—Abraham was compelled to say, "Bury my dead out of my sight."—So the bereaved go, and inscribe over the grave of the once sparkling eye, and the once ruby lip, and the once fascinating tongue—

"How loved, how valued once avails thee not,  
To whom related, or by whom begot :  
A heap of dust alone remains of thee ;  
'Tis all thou art, and all the proud shall be."

It is also the earthly house of this "tabernacle." This reminds us of its weakness, frailty, and danger. A tabernacle, though covered, has no foundation: it has no nails fastened in a sure place, but pins and cords instead; it is a movable, temporary, slender abode, soon taken down, and easily destroyed—The Apostle therefore speaks of its being "dissolved."

But what means "a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens?" Some suppose that it is a description of the resurrection-body. The body, when glorified, may well be thus expressed; but the reference here is to something nearer, something to be found at death, and enjoyed before the revival of the body; as we see in the verses immediately following. It is therefore a representation of the blessed condition into which the soul

enters as soon as it leaves "dull mortality behind." The Apostle would intimate that the soul does not die with the body. It does not resemble Job's sons; when the house fell with them, they were crushed in the ruins; but here, while the house is destroyed the resident escapes. The believer in death is not like an ejected tenant, forced out of his present dwelling without having another provided to receive him. "I go," said Jesus, "to prepare a place for you:" "where I am, there shall also my servants be." This blessed abode is characterized by four articles. The first tells us that it is solid. It is not a tabernacle, but "a building." The second, that it is reared by a Divine agency. It is a building "of God," and "not made with hands." The third marks its permanence. It is "eternal." The fourth shews its situation. It is "in the heavens." We must arise and depart hence to enjoy it.

But here is a confidence expressed with regard to it: "We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." The confidence is twofold: the confidence of faith and the confidence of hope. The first regards the reality of the thing. The belief of this is necessary. Some deny it; others doubt it: but Christians know it. This knowledge was not possessed by the heathens. None of them ever thought of the restoration of the body: but many suppose that they believed in the immortality of the soul. Yet what was their belief? Did they ever teach the doctrine publicly? Did they ever reason from it as a principle? Did they ever urge it as a motive in their morals? They could not

They were not *convinced* themselves. Seneca dared not decide whether death destroyed the soul or delivered it. And he who, of all the philosophers, spake the best upon the subject, left suspicions at death that his mind was not satisfied. But, as Paley says, among a thousand *conjectures*, one of them happened to be right; and with them it was nothing better than conjecture—they had no proof of the thing itself: and if, as he justly adds, nothing more is *known* in religion than is *proved*, “life and immortality were brought to light through the Gospel.” Now every Christian, however poor and illiterate, admits it as a fact; and though he cannot evince the certainty of his belief, as many did in the first ages, who suffered the loss of all things, yet he acts upon it, and in the whole course of the religious life “walks by faith, and not by sight.”

There is also the confidence of hope. This regards not the reality of the state only, but our own claim to the possession of it. The one of these does not necessarily produce the other. How many, alas! are there, who believe there is such a glorious state, who have either no expectation of enjoying it, or an unfounded one that will issue in the most dreadful disappointment! They never, how strange! give themselves a moment’s concern about it; though nothing can be of equal importance; and they *know it!* And *know* that if they do not receive a happy immortality, they must endure a miserable one: and thus the greatest blessing will prove the greatest curse!

Yet all the partakers of divine grace do not possess this confidence equally. We read of the *full assur-*

ance of hope; which supposes inferior degrees of it. We may also observe that no degree of it, however established, is free from fluctuations. The confidence of appropriation, therefore, even in the Lord's own people, is not so extensive as the confidence of belief. Neither is it essential to their safety—Yet how necessary is it to their comfort! How desirable is it, amidst the troubles of life, and the growing infirmities of nature, to know that “when the earthly house of this tabernacle shall be dissolved, we shall have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” “Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation:” and “give me a token for good.”

What a question then arises here—“Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord, and who shall dwell in his holy place?” The best way to ascertain your title to the inheritance of the saints in light is, to look after your meetness for it. Your hope of the one without the other is presumption and madness: for can you imagine that God will bring you into a condition which it is impossible for you to fill or enjoy? But if he has prepared you for the blessedness, be assured he has prepared the blessedness for you. It is a holy state—and if you now love holiness, it is a state in which Christ is all in all—and if you are now rejoicing in him as your portion, “He that hath wrought you for the selfsame thing is God, who hath also given you the earnest of the Spirit.”

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## AUGUST 17.—MORNING.

"Ye know all things" 1 JOHN ii. 20.

THE reason or the cause is previously given—"We have an unction from the Holy One." This unction means, the Spirit of grace and truth. This the Saviour possessed personally: he "was anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power;" and had the Spirit without measure. And as Mediator, for the suffering of death, he received all the fulness of it for the supply of his people. They therefore derive it from him: and it is not only sanctifying, but illuminating: it leads them "into all truth;" and "they know all things." This is a bold expression. But the extensiveness of it must be taken with four distinctions.

First. It means only things *religious*. It does not intend to intimate that every Christian is familiar with the secrets of nature; the resources of trade; the mysteries of government; the structure of language; and a thousand other things. With regard to these, he may be far surpassed by the people of the world. Not that religion stultifies its possessor: it is favourable to the acquisition of knowledge generally, by rousing and employing the mind, and thereby improving it. But it is distinguishable from learning and science; and makes us acquainted with "the things which accompany salvation."

Secondly. It means, not only things religious, but *revealed*. "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed belong unto us, and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law." This passage should

never be forgotten. It would draw some persons a little further from the decrees of God, and a little nearer to his commands. The sacred writers prophesy but in part. Had every thing been made known in the Scripture, the world could not have contained the books that would have been written; and our attention would have been so divided and diffused, that the one thing needful would have been forgotten. There are numberless subjects, upon which a busy and curious mind would speculate, concerning which the word is silent. But where God says nothing, we are not to be wise above what is written. If men will conjecture, let them conjecture, without devouring much of their time, or injuring their temper; and without censoriousness, self-conceit, and positiveness. He that hath a dream, let him tell a dream. What is the chaff to the wheat? When our Saviour had foretold the duty and destination of Peter; and Peter, not satisfied with this, inquired concerning John—"Lord, and what shall this man do?" instead of answering him, he reproved his impatient and presumptuous curiosity: "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me."

Thirdly. It not only means things revealed; but revealed things of *importance*. Every thing, even in the Scripture, is not equally momentous and interesting. Some things are hard to be understood; but then it is not necessary to be able to understand them. Yet such things as these are not without their use, if they make us humble, by shewing us the limits of the human understanding; and lead us, while we *adore here*—to *study elsewhere*. How many things

are there in the geography, the chronology, the natural philosophy of the Scriptures, in which we may be safely unversed! A man may be able to number his days, so as to apply his heart unto wisdom, without knowing when Antichrist will be destroyed. He may not know what creature Behemoth was, or where Ophir was; and yet he may know what is life eternal; and the way to it he may know. The Jews had the fiery cloudy pillar, not to examine, but to follow. They knew no more of its essence at the end of forty years than at the beginning; but it had led them by a right way to the city of habitation. There are things which concern the Lord Jesus: and to know these is the excellency of knowledge. These will make us wise unto salvation. There are things that are ornamental to a Christian—and these are not to be undervalued; but others are essential to his very being. Some things conduce to our comfort; but others involve even our safety. It is desirable, but not equally necessary, that a Christian should be informed in all these truths.

Fourthly. With regard to things of importance, it only means, a *comparative* knowledge of these in our present state. Of the God of grace as well as of the God of nature we are compelled to say—"How small a portion is known of Him!" What one truth is there that we can trace back completely to its rise, or follow on to its last outfall? We read of things which angels desire to look into; of a peace which passeth all understanding; of a joy unspeakable. The love of Christ passeth knowledge.

"The cross, the manger, and the throne,  
Are big with glories yet unknown."

More we cannot concede. If Christians are comparatively ignorant, they are comparatively wise. They are children of the light and of the day. They have an understanding given them to know him that is true. Not that they are endued with a new physical faculty: but they have another kind of knowledge; and it is as superior as it is peculiar. There is as much difference between their present and their former knowledge, as between the shining of the glow-worm and the vital lustre of the sun. They have a *heart* to know. They see divine things, not only in their reality, but in their *beauty* and *excellency*; and while this gives them a firmer conviction of their certainty than they had before, so it gains their affection to them, and brings their souls under their influence. Thus with them the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth. They walk in the light as he is in the light. The secret of the Lord is with them, and he shew's them his covenant. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual *judgeth all things.*"

Thus another reproach is rolled away. Christians are not only considered as slaves; as cowards; as the victims of gloom and melancholy; but are often despised or pitied as fools. Yet are they the wisest people in the world. Their religion, from first to last, is wisdom. And it is justified of all her children.

## AUGUST 17.—EVENING.

"And Jesus went before them: and they were amazed: and, as they followed, they were afraid." MARK x. 32.

THEY were now, it is said, in the way going up to Jerusalem, where *He* was to suffer and die upon the cross, after enduring every kind of insult and cruelty. But a circumstance is added which is worthy of our attention—"Jesus went before them, and they were amazed: and, as they followed, they were afraid." That this is not mentioned without design may be inferred from the brevity of the Evangelists. Had every thing pertaining to the history of our Lord been recorded, the world could not have contained the books that would have been written. But when it is necessary to comprise much in a little, a writer, if wise, will introduce nothing that is insignificant and uninteresting—The incident therefore is mentioned to shew how far he was from being unwilling to advance to the post of danger. The action intimates how full of zeal and courage he was; and that in the knowledge of all that lay before him he was eager to engage in the conflict. Many have vapoured away while the enemy was not at hand: and the children of Ephraim, carrying bows and spears, yet turned their back in the day of battle—Such a difference is there between an imaginary and a real, between a prospective and a present encounter. But this distinction does not apply to him. He who in the beginning said, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God, I delight to do thy will; yea, thy law is within my heart," could also say, as the scene approached, "I

have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" and after administering the memorials of his death, he arose from the table, and said, "That the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence." Oh! if we were as willing to receive the blessings of his great salvation as he was to procure them for us by anguish and by blood, we should all be able immediately to rejoice in him with joy unspeakable and full of glory!

At other times, he seemed to give his disciples the precedence. When any advantage was to be gained, he followed them. It is an honour and a privilege to preach the word first in any place: and this privilege and honour he conferred on his disciples; for he sent them "before his face into every city and place whither he himself should come." But when the call was to suffer and die, he went before them, to stimulate, encourage, and embolden them, by his own example—And who would not follow where he leads the way? How well may we glory in any fellowship with him! How fully may we be assured of the goodness of the cause! How confidently may we reckon upon our succour and success! "Lord," by thy grace, "I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest."

But "they were amazed." It is not wonderful that his disciples expressed so much surprise, but so little: for things had never been seen "on this fashion;" and they were every day in the midst of something peculiar, remarkable, and even miraculous. But many of their feelings are not recorded;

and what is marvellous and extraordinary, by repetition and continuance, becomes familiar, and ceases to strike. The Jews, after a few weeks or days, gathered the manna from heaven with as little reflection as our rustics reap the corn, and viewed the pillar of fire as thousands do the sun, that is, without any surprise or one thought of the agency of God!—On this occasion, perhaps, they were amazed to see him so cheerful and full of ardour, in view of so menacing an expedition—perhaps, indeed, at the thought how *he* could suffer at all. Nothing had ever occurred like it before. Many had suffered; our earth had always been a vale of tears; but every sufferer before had sinned—whereas *he* did no sin, did nothing amiss, did all things well, and was “the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” “If *he* suffers, where is Providence? Where is the God of judgment if *he* is spit upon, and scourged, and crucified? We also trusted that this was he which should have redeemed Israel!” At present their knowledge was very limited and indistinct. They resembled the blind man when half enlightened, who “saw men as trees walking.” They were unable as yet to comprehend the spirituality of his empire, the nature of his salvation, and especially the giving his flesh for the life of the world. They were in a kind of dawn, and “the light was neither dark nor clear.” Their glimmerings and their doubts kept them in a degree of surprise, conjecture, and confusion, significant of the experience of many with regard to various things which, all through life, keep them in a sort of amazement.

Though *he* was ready, they were not so forward;

*they required drawing on—“And as they followed, they were afraid.”* The fear, we conceive, was not only or principally on *his* behalf, but on their own—“If he is apprehended and put to death, how shall we escape? What will become of us?” As yet they were not sufficiently mortified to the world, and willing to deny themselves. They preferred a whole skin to a scar. It was not till the Holy Ghost was given that they were able to rejoice and glory in tribulation. But, as their knowledge, and faith, and hope increased, none of these things moved them, neither counted they their lives dear. It was enough that Christ was magnified in their body, whether by life or by death.

Do we not here see how worthy the Scriptures are of our confidence? How honestly they report facts! The writer of this Gospel was himself one of those who appeared to so little advantage on this occasion, compared with their Lord and Master. Yet he makes no scruple to tell us all their fears and faults, regardless of consequences. Truth was his only concern; and his very manner commends it to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

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## AUGUST 18.—MORNING.

“My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O Lord.” Ps. v. 3.

AUTHORS have found the morning the best time for study and composition. Hence it has been called the friend of the muses. It would be easy to prove that it is equally a friend to the graces and the duties. It is the finest season for reflection and

devotion. David found it so; and therefore resolves: "My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O Lord." What voice? The voice of praise; and the voice of prayer: the one excited by looking back; the other, by looking forward.

How much is there in the morning to call forth the voice of thanksgiving! Let us think of the season we have just passed through. How many houseless creatures this night have had no place where to lay their head! How many victims of accident and disease have been full of tossing to and fro, until the dawning of the day; their beds have not comforted them, nor their couch eased their complaint! How many have been deprived of repose while attending their neighbours, friends, and relations, in sickness and sorrow! How many, since the last setting sun, have entered an awful eternity! How many, this night, have been cut off in their sins! Many have been terrified, robbed, injured, murdered, by wicked and unreasonable men! How many have been consumed by fire, or drowned with water! How many, this night, have been engaged in works of darkness; and who, if any knew them, would be in the terrors of the shadow of death! How many have risen this morning to pass the day in anguish! How many to suffer want! How many, who have all things richly to enjoy, have risen only to live another day without God in the world! They lie down and rise up like the beasts that perish: God is not in all their thoughts. And is it otherwise with us? What shall we render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards us? Bless the Lord, O my soul; and, all that is within me, bless his holy

Name. O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his Name together.

And with how many of these merciful nights have we been favoured! Hence, perhaps, we have been so little affected with the goodness of God in them. How strange! that what increases the greatness of our obligation, should diminish the sense of it! Yet it is by the interruption, the suspension, the want of our comforts, we are made to learn the value of them. Let us guard against this perverseness of ingratitude. Let us remember, that if our mercies are common, they must be numerous; and if numerous, they multiply the claims to our praise.

And shall our gratitude evaporate in a mere morning acknowledgment? Shall we not, by the mercies of God, dedicate ourselves to his service; and be in his fear all the day long?

And when we think of the day before us, how much is there to awaken concern! And what is *our* concern without the attention of God? He shall therefore in the morning hear, not only the voice of praise, but the voice of prayer.

Who is to guide me through the day upon which I have entered? How much depends upon one mistake in my movements! And how easily may I go astray! The way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps. "Cause me to hear thy loving kindness in the morning; for in thee do I trust: cause me to know the way wherein I should walk; for I lift up my soul unto thee."

Who is to guard me through the day? And I am much more exposed when awake than when asleep.

My soul is more exposed—more exposed to sin—and sin is the greatest evil. And what am I, to resist a corrupt heart, a wicked world, and all the powers of darkness? “Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe. Be thou my arm every morning; my salvation also in the time of trouble.”

Who is to help me through the day? I have many duties to discharge. I am to live soberly, righteously, and godly. I am to walk in wisdom—towards those that are without: I am to speak the truth in love: I am to adorn the doctrine of God my Saviour in all things. “Lord, without thee, I can do nothing. Let thy grace be sufficient for me; and thy strength made perfect in weakness.”

Who is to give me success in the business of the day? I know I ought not to be idle; but to be diligently and prudently employed in my lawful calling. Means are mine; but how much more is necessary than my wisdom and anxiety! “The blessing of the Lord it maketh rich; and he addeth no sorrow with it.” “Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain. It is vain for me to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so he giveth his beloved sleep.”

Who is to prepare me for the events of the day? And I know not what the day may bring forth. Perhaps I may receive the most unwelcome intelligence. Perhaps I may sustain losses in property. Perhaps I may meet with mortifications from my fellow-creatures; and be tried with disappointments in friends. My child may this day fall sick. The desire of mine eyes may be taken away with a stroke.

There may be but a step between me and death. It is wonderful we live a day through. “May I know how to be abased, or how to abound. If in the world I have tribulation, in the Saviour may I have peace. So teach me to number my days, that I may apply my heart unto wisdom—That, whether I live, I may live unto the Lord; or, whether I die, I may die unto the Lord: so that, living and dying, I may be the Lord’s.”.

## AUGUST 18.—EVENING.

“Which entereth into that within the veil; whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus.” HEB. vi 19, 20.

IN the preceding words the Apostle speaks of the Christian’s hope. He likens it to an anchor; and commends it as sure and steadfast. But the anchor to secure the vessel has a place of holding: so has this hope. Yet mark the resemblance and the difference between them; for every image applied to spiritual purposes teacheth both by comparison and disparity. The anchor searches after something invisible: it does not rest in the water, but searches the bottom—and this hope regards something beyond our sight. The anchor is cast downward—but this hope ascends. The anchor grasps the ground—but this hope seizes something in heaven. What is it? It is Jesus—“Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus.”

He is called, expressly called, “our hope,” and “the hope set before us.” Every thing, as perishing sinners, we need, is to be found in him, and only in him: for “it hath pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell.” and we are blessed “with

all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in him;" and he alone can encourage and justify our hope—He is the only ground of it—There would be no more hope for sinners than for devils were it not for his incarnation and atonement, who "took not on him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham," and "was in all points made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people." But what are we not authorized to hope for when we think of *him*, and thank God for his *unspeakable gift*? "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"

But the Apostle here particularly fixes our hope upon him—as being within the veil—and as having entered as our forerunner for us.

In truth, if our hope entered within the veil, and found he had not entered there—it would find nothing in heaven itself to fasten upon, and must shrink back into despair. But it is enough—it is every thing to find *him there*. Then we see that he is in a condition and a capacity to save and bless us; and we resemble Jacob, when he heard that Joseph was alive, and lord of all the land of Egypt. Then we also see that he has accomplished his mediation on earth. He had taken our place; our iniquities were laid on him; and he became answerable for them as our surety. But how could we know the ransom was paid unless he was released? We know he died; but unless he is risen again, and gone unto the Father, our faith is vain, and we are yet in our sins.

Therefore, says Peter, God "raised him from the dead, and gave him glory; that our faith and hope might be in God." For then we know that he has accomplished the work that was given him to do; that he has put away sin by the sacrifice of himself; that he has made peace by the blood of his cross; and opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers.

But there is an additional confirmation of our hope in the character under which he entered heaven. Enoch and Elias ascended to heaven embodied; but they entered for themselves; and it did not follow because they entered that we should enter also. We might have inferred the possibility of our following them, but not the certainty: they entered before us, but were not our forerunners—But Jesus as "our forerunner entered for us." There was a joy set before *him*; and he was received up into glory; and had a name given him above every name. But the Apostle here does not speak of his entering for him, self, but for us. Had a forerunner entered for him—it would not have been so wonderful; but, as if we were the grand party, the forerunner is for us—and he that forerunner *himself!* Now this shews a connexion between his entering and ours; and a relation of a peculiar kind; and containing nothing less than a pledge. A forerunner was a harbinger, one that preceded the rest, to awaken attention, to arrange things for those behind, and to be in readiness to receive them. In other cases, the forerunner was inferior to the company for which he acted. Thus John, the forerunner of the Messiah, acknowledges that he was not worthy to stoop down and unloose the latchet of his shoes. But here the fore-

runner is infinitely the greatest, and the whole transaction can only be resolved into the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, though he was rich, for our sakes became poor, and made himself of no reputation, but took upon him the form of a servant. Oh! wonder of wonders! The forerunner, the King of kings, and Lord of lords—Was ever such condescension displayed? The company represented and provided for; the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind—Was ever such honour conferred? Yet such honour have all his saints. Because it was expedient for them, he went away; and entering the holy place, he said, “I am come—and all my people are coming—I am come to prepare a place for them—and where I am, there shall they be also.”

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## AUGUST 19.—MORNING.

“I am married unto you.” JER. iii. 14.

MARRIAGE is the nearest and the most intimate of all human relations. It is surpassed only by the union between soul and body. Here are two persons meeting together, who perhaps never saw each other some time before; yet, coming under the power of this ordinance, are united in a connexion that exceeds the claims of nature, and the wife becomes dearer than the dearest parent. “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall be one flesh.”

Thus Christians, though once strangers and far off, became the people of God, a people nigh unto him;

yea, one with him, in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten.—He is not ashamed to own the relation—“I am married unto you.” What is supremely and essentially included in this relation, when properly established?

In such a marriage, there is mutual love. This love regards the person, and not the endowments. And such a love there is between God and his people. It commenced on his side much earlier than on theirs; and his love to them produced their love to him. For love begets love: and we love him, because he first loved us. Yet their love is mutual—and he says, “I love them that love me.”

The same may be said of mutual choice. In a proper marriage, the parties freely elect each other. God has chosen his people: and they have chosen him. For, though once averse to him, as their Lord and portion, they are made willing in the day of his power; and this power is not violence, but influence, the influence of wisdom and goodness. He works in them to will and to do of his good pleasure. He draws them, and they run after him; and they can all say, from the heart, “Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee.”

In this connexion, there is also confidence and communication. Where this is wanting, the spirit of it is materially injured; and the relation is very defectively maintained. It is readily allowed, that the woman should not carry on designs concealed from the husband; but is not every thing here reciprocal? And is he justified in treating her with reserve and silence? Yet there are many wives, who have had no intimation of the state of their husbands' affairs,

till they have found themselves plunged into a condition overwhelming them with surprise, as well as calamity.—The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him ; and he will shew them his covenant. And they, in all their ways, acknowledge him. They pour out their hearts before him ; they hide nothing from him.

There is, also, in this alliance, fellowship and community of goods. However poor or mean the wife was before, she is now raised to a participation of the husband's rank and affluence ; and however free and independent he was before, the husband now enters into all the condition of the wife. And thus the believer dedicates himself to God, with all he is and has. He feels his cause his own : he deplores its reproaches ; he rejoices in its success. And God gives himself, with all he is and all he has, to the believer. In all his afflictions he is afflicted : and he that toucheth him, toucheth the apple of his eye.

Finally. There is complacency and delight. As the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee. He will rejoice over thee with joy ; he will rest in his love ; he will rejoice over thee with singing.

How wonderful is this ! And yet how true !

How blessed are the people who are in such a case !—

Art thou in this happy, this glorious condition ? All hail ! Thy maker is thy husband. There was joy in the presence of the angels of God the hour thou gavest thy consent to the proposals of the Gospel.

Art thou willing to be united to him ? His ministers invite and woo thee. Come—for all things are now ready. Resemble not Israel, who would have

none of him; and so were given up. Behold, now is the accepted time: behold, now is the day of salvation.

## AUGUST 19.—EVENING.

*"And he sent, and beheaded John in the prison."*

MATT. xiv. 10.

JOHN was pronounced by the Judge of all to be greater than they who had been born of women before him; and to be more than a prophet. He wrought indeed no miracle, but he ushered in the Messiah; and baptized him; and proclaimed him to the multitude as the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world; and cheerfully said, He must increase, but I must decrease.

Who can help grieving that this burning and shining light should not have gone out naturally, instead of being suddenly extinguished in full blaze? Yet so it has often been. Many of the Lord's most eminent servants have been removed in the midst of their days and usefulness—perhaps to tell us that his cause does not depend on any instruments, however necessary as well as desirable they seem to us—but upon himself, who has the residue of the Spirit. John not only died early, but suffered a violent death. It was the consequence of his fidelity. Herod (the son of Herod the Great), tetrarch of Galilee, a dissolute prince, in his journey to Rome, had been entertained at the court of his brother Philip, tetrarch of Trachonitis. While there, he formed a criminal intrigue with his brother's wife. He was now living incestuously with her, in defiance of all shame, when John had an interview with him. John acquitted

himself with unflinching integrity. He told him that rank did not excuse crime, and that kings are no more above law than their subjects—"It is not lawful for thee to have her." From that hour his doom was determined. He was only spared for a season, from the tyrant's fear of the people. It is probable however that Herod would not have put him to death, had he been left to himself, for he seems to have had a veneration for John. But when a man has a mistress he is no longer his own ; he is a servant, he is a slave—and engaged in a course of iniquity, he proceeds from evil to evil—and finds one sin necessary to another.

Nothing can equal the revenge, the restlessness, and the cunning of an imperious whorish woman. With her, when there is a will, a way will soon follow. Herodias seizes an opportunity for her foul purpose on the king's birthday. She introduced her daughter to dance—the dance it is presumed was what they now call waltzing. It excited and charmed Herod; "whereupon he promised with an oath to give her whatsoever she should ask. And she, being before instructed of her mother, said, Give me here John Baptist's head in a charger. And the king was sorry : nevertheless, for the oath's sake, and them which sat with him at meat, he commanded it to be given her." Not a person present, male or female, interposed a word on his behalf! The barbarous deed was done without even the form of a trial ; done privately, and in prison ! When God shall make inquisition for blood, and the earth shall no more cover her slain, what scenes of horror will be brought to light ! Perhaps John was praying, perhaps sleeping, when the executioner

arrived—But he was ready for the event, and the ~~ax~~ would only release him into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. Yet the head,—the veins bleeding, the hair clotted with gore, the eyes all wan and half-opened,—was brought in a charger and given to the damsel; and she brought it to her mother, who according to Josephus, stuck the tongue full of needles—what tenderness and delicacy!—and yet these females had often affected to tremble at the shaking of a leaf! But there is no ground for general reflections here. A virtuous woman need not feel herself dishonoured by wretches who have disowned her sex, and renounced her very nature. We do not think the worse of the elect angels because some of their order, and created at the same time with them, became devils.

Let us turn from the master to his disciples. Two things they did. “They took up the body, and buried it.” Whether his head was returned for interment with his body, or whether the ladies kept it for further entertainment and insult, we know not; but doubtless the disciples obtained it if they could. Respect is due to the remains of God’s servants. Stephen’s corpse, stoned with such malice and fury, must have been a dreadful spectacle; but devout men carried him to his burial, and made great lamentation over him. It is probable Zechariah and Elizabeth were dead, and none of his other relations were at hand; but his disciples felt a deep interest in him, and performed the last rite—It required courage thus to espouse and honour one the king had first imprisoned and now slain: but perfect love casteth out fear.

Again. "They went and told Jesus." He needed not the information, but they did right to lay the sorrowful case before him. It was their duty. It was their privilege. While John was living, these disciples were jealous and envious of his successor and superior: and were much concerned to keep up a separate interest. But they have now dropped their prejudices and strife; and are willing to go over to him, and become *his* followers. And thus we already see their loss turned into gain. Whatever brings us to him is a blessing.

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## AUGUST 20.—MORNING.

"His going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth."

HOSHEA vi. 3.

"His going forth," and "his coming," mean his displays and his communications, on behalf of those who earnestly and perseveringly seek after him; according to the words immediately preceding—"Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord." That contains the *assurance* of their success: Here is added the *illustration* of it. It consists of two images, equally beautiful and encouraging.

The first derived from the morning—"His going forth is prepared as the morning." When the morning is not yet come, we fully rely upon it. We know it is coming: we know it is secured in the appointment of Providence, and the arrangements of Nature. It never yet failed; and it never will as long as the world endures. And does not the God of all grace

express the immutability of his counsel by the certainty of this very allusion? "Thus saith the Lord; If ye can break my covenant of the day, and my covenant of the night, and that there should not be day and night in their season; then may also my covenant be broken with David my servant." What can hinder the approach and the rising of the sun? And his going forth is prepared as surely as the morning.

And as *luminously* too. The morning drives away the darkness, and shines upon our path; so that we see where we are; and how to move. "If a man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world. But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him." The Lord will come, and manifest himself to his people. He will shew them his covenant. He will lead them into all truth. And, with regard to doctrine, and experience, and practice, and also their interest in the Divine favour, he will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight: these things will he do unto them, and not forsake them.

It is also as *delightsome* as the morning. The night is a season of gloom, as it is a period of confinement, and danger, and fear, and anxiety. Paul's mariners, in the storm, cast four anchors, and wished for the day. David refers to travellers and sentinels, who watched for the morning, as the image of his waiting for the Lord. Some nights are less cheerless than others; but at best, they have only the moon and stars; the sun is wanting. He alone can make the morning; and when he comes, the birds sing, the lambs play, and man partakes of the cheerfulness that

spreads all around. “Truly the light is sweet; and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun.” Creatures are pleasing; but none of them can supply the place of God. He is our sun, as well as our shield; and the language of the gracious heart is—“Oh! when wilt thou come unto me? Thou alone canst put my fears to flight. Thou alone canst inspire me with joy unspeakable and full of glory.”

But the morning comes not all at once, but gradually. What a difference is there between the first glimmerings of the dawn and the splendour of noon! So, the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

The second is derived from the rain—“He shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth.” God asks, “Can any of the vanities of the Gentiles send rain?” He claims the production as his own divine prerogative; and justly wonders that we do not notice it more than we do—“Neither say they in their heart, Let us now fear the Lord our God that giveth rain; both the former and the latter in his season.” In Judæa the rain was less frequent and more periodical than with us. It peculiarly fell after autumn and spring; that is, just after seedtime, and just before reaping: the former, to soften the ground, and quicken the grain, and aid the springing thereof; the latter to fill the corn in the ear, and hasten its maturity.

What would nature be without rain? We are equally dependent on the grace of God. But, under the influences of his word and Spirit, we revive and grow as the corn. These influences are always need-

ful; but is it pressing the metaphor to observe, that there are two seasons when they are peculiarly experienced? The one is connected with the beginning of the divine life—this may be called the former rain. The other, with the close of it—this may be called the latter rain. The one is to enliven; the other, to confirm. To the “former,” many can look back, and ask,

“Where is the blessedness I knew  
When first I saw the Lord?  
Where is that soul-refreshing view  
Of Jesus and his word?”

—Others are longing for the “latter.” Their salvation is nearer than when they believed. But they do not yet feel as they wish. They want more faith, more hope, more consolation—more of all the fulness of God. Let the last showers descend; and the appointed weeks of harvest come; and the produce be brought home, with shoutings, “Grace, grace, unto it!”

## AUGUST 20.—EVENING.

“Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.” PSALM i. 1, 2.

HAPPINESS is “our nature’s end and aim.” All seek it: and David here tells us who finds it. To prevent mistake and to secure impression, he describes his character negatively and positively.

First, he says, “Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scorn-

ful." Here we see not only continuance, but progression. Accordingly, not only the Scripture, but all observation, shews us that the wicked proceed from evil to evil, and wax worse and worse. One sin often pleads for another, and often renders another necessary, either for the purpose of assistance or concealment: while every fresh act of transgression weakens the restraints of fear and shame, and adds to the force of habit.—The sinner's course is here accurately traced. He begins with evil company, and is flattered by their maxims, excited by their entreaties, encouraged by their commendations, and emboldened by their example—"He walks in the counsel of the ungodly." Evil communications corrupt good manners. Bad principles lead to bad practice; and having tampered with danger, he exposes himself to temptation, and by his heedlessness and position even invites it—"He stands in the way of sinners." At last he feels a comparative rest from those uneasinesses of conscience and doubts of mind that once frequently disturbed him, and can scoff as well as sin, reviling good men, and mocking at things sacred—"Thus he sits in the seat of the scornful." He who has reached this distance may judge of his progress; he may see how far he has gone, and how far he has to go—which indeed is very little; for "the scorner's chair," says old divinity, "is placed very near the door of hell."

"But all this is negative." And, in a world like this, and with such a nature as ours, no small part of religion consists in avoiding that which is evil. All the Ten Commandments are prohibitory with the exception of two. "Honour thy father and mother"—

this is positive. And "Remember to keep holy the Sabbath day"—this is positive—yet a part even of this command is interdictory. But all the other mandates tell us what we are not to do: and "God having raised up his own Son, sent him to bless us, by turning away every one of us from our iniquities." But negative religion is not sufficient. "Cease to do evil, *and learn to do well,*" is the requisition of that God who not only forbears to punish, but enriches and dignifies: who not only saves from hell, but exalts to heaven. The tree that was ordered to be cut down and cast into the fire brought forth no good fruit: and the servant that was condemned to outer darkness was wicked because unprofitable. A man may not swear; but does he pray? He may not rob the poor; but does he relieve them? We are to be zealous of good works. Therefore,

Secondly, he says—"But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night." If the law here spoken of be what we call the moral law, it is true that every partaker of Divine grace, with Paul, delights in it. How indeed can it be otherwise? since the essence, the whole of it, is to love—to love God supremely, and his neighbours as himself. But it here means the word of God. It is called his law because it is not opinion, counsel, or advice, but the will of God, from which lies no appeal, and the authority of whose decisions the day of judgment will ratify. David could here speak from his own sentiments and feelings. There is nothing in which he seems to have found so much delight as in the Scripture. "I rejoice at thy word," says he, "*as one that findeth great spoil.*" "Thy testimonies

are the rejoicing of my heart." "I love them exceedingly." "More to be desired are they than gold : yea, than much fine gold : sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb." Yet David had but a small portion of Revelation. How much has been added since ! No wonder therefore that every believer is distinguished by his attachment to this blessed volume. What renders it so attractive is, that it meets him with discoveries, promises, invitations, suited to all his wants. As lost, he is here informed of a Saviour, and a great one. As guilty and weak, he here finds righteousness and strength. As having nothing, he is here replenished with all the unsearchable riches of Christ. His experience also, as he advances in the divine life, adds to its preciousness. He has tried it in every condition ; it has often relieved his fears, refreshed his weary spirit, revived him in the midst of trouble ; and he can say, to the praise of its glory, "Unless thy law had been my delight, I should have perished in mine affliction."

Hence, in this "law he meditates day and night." It is the peculiar, yet common subject of his thoughts. He not only sets apart frequent seasons for the more express performance of the duty, but his mind naturally, and readily, and pleasingly returns to the exercise whenever it is disengaged. For the thoughts follow the affections. Where the treasure is there will the heart be also. If my meditation be sweet it will be frequent ; and I shall be able to say, "How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God ! how great is the sum of them ! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand : when I awake, I am still with thee."

## AUGUST 21.—MORNING.

"Therefore his sisters sent unto him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick." JOHN xi. 3.

THESE words furnish several sources of remark and instruction.

The First regards the *love* of Jesus. In his love to Lazarus there was something peculiar, and something common. He loved him with a partial, and he loved him with a divine, affection. To know Christ after the flesh, is a privilege which has long since ceased; and to be loved by him under the advantage of his humanity, was a favour restricted to few. But there is, however, another sense in which, as he loved Lazarus, so he loves us; and though we share not in the partial regard of the friend, we are the subjects of the divine regard of the Saviour. This love commenced from no excellency in us, like the love of creatures. It took knowledge of us when we were sinners. It began before the foundation of the world. It led him to espouse our cause, and brought him under an engagement to suffer and die for us—His people remember this love more than wine.

The Second regards the *affliction* of Lazarus—He was "sick." Sickness is one of the common calamities of life; and it is one of the most painful and trying. Yet Lazarus was exercised with it, though he was loved of Jesus. This explains the nature of his love, and shews us that it does not exempt its subjects from distress. It is not the foolish fondness of a father, who, when correction is necessary, spares the child, for his crying. He that thus

"spareth the rod, hateth his son: but he that loveth him, chastens him betimes." Could we now see, as we shall hereafter, the principle, the design, the alleviations, the advantages of the afflictions of the righteous, we should perceive that they are not only compatible with Divine love, but the fruit, the proof, of it. "Whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth; and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth."

The Third regards the *mission* of the sisters—"Therefore the sisters sent unto Jesus." Their affliction led to this application. To induce us to send to him, is the design of our trials; for we are too forgetful of him in ease and prosperity—"In their affliction they will seek me early." What can we do without him then? Therefore says the Teacher, as well as the Chastiser, "Call upon me in the day of trouble." And what a solace! what a relief! what a source of support, sanctification, and deliverance, is prayer! John's disciples, therefore, when their master was beheaded, not only took up the body and buried it, but "went and told Jesus." "I will say unto God," was the resolve of Job, "Do not condemn me; shew me wherefore thou contendest with me." And says David, "From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the Rock that is higher than I." Thus it has been with all who have *heard* the rod—They have all said, "A glorious high throne from the beginning has been the place of our sanctuary."

Therefore his *sisters* sent unto him. It is pleasing when, in our natural relations, we have spiritual friends who will carry our cases, and spread them before the Lord. Many in their sickness have

connexions about them, who are kind and attentive: but they never speak a word to them of their souls; and never administer to them the cordials of the Gospel, though they often apply self-righteous opiates to stupefy conscience. They send for the physician and the lawyer; but do not address the Saviour for them. But some, like Lazarus, have those who will bear them upon their minds, and call in the aid of the Hope of Israel, the Saviour thereof, in the time of trouble. And what an encouragement and comfort is this to those who are scarcely able to lift a thought to God for themselves; whose broken and distracted petitions seem unworthy of notice; and who know that the prayer of the righteous availleth much!

The Fourth is, the *message* they conveyed to him —“Saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick.” From hence we may learn two things.—First. The Lord’s love gives us encouragement in prayer, and furnishes us with our most prevailing plea in dealing with him. They do not say, he whom *we* love—though this was true; nor, he who loves *thee*—though this was true: but, he whom *thou* lovest. How wise, how expressive, was this! As much as to say, “Hast not thou deigned to regard him already? Has not thy kindness for him raised our confidence in thee, and our expectation from thee? Will not others turn their eyes towards thee, and see whether thy friendship is like the friendship of the world, which leaves its dependents in the hour of necessity and distress?” “A true friend loveth at all times; but is born for adversity.” We read of pleading with God; and filling our mouth with arguments. Our most suitable and successful

ence must be derived from himself, and especially from his own goodness. “I plead nothing of my own—not even my love to thee:

‘ Yet, I love thee, and adore :  
O for grace to love thee more !—

But my love to thee is weak and cold ; and, whatever it be, it is the effect of thy love to me. I was once a stranger, and an enemy, and should have remained so still, hadst thou not found a way into my heart. But thou hast redeemed me by thy blood. Thou hast called me by thy grace. Thou hast opened my blind eyes. Thou hast turned my feet into the path of peace. And, after all this love, wilt thou cast me off ? Couldest thou not have destroyed me, without shewing me such things as these ?”

Secondly. It is better for us, when we seek the Lord for temporal things, to refer our suit to his own good pleasure. I admire the manner in which these pious women addressed him. They do not prescribe—they hardly petition—they particularize nothing. They do not say, Lord, come to this house—Come immediately—Remove his malady—What will become of us, if Lazarus should die ! But they state the case, and leave it: “Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick.” When, therefore, we have to pray for deliverance from some trouble, or the acquisition of some outward favour, let us do it with modesty and reserve. For these blessings are promised, not absolutely, but conditionally ; that is, if they are good for us ; and in the very same way they are to be implored. We must not desire them if they would be hurtful ; and they may be injurious.

and God only knows whether this would be the result of success and indulgence. Had the Jews prayed in this manner, for flesh, he would not have given them their hearts' desire, and sent leanness into their souls. What we extort, as it were, from God by restless importunity, turns the blessing into a curse. The feverish and inflamed state of the mind renders the gratification of the craving dangerous. We cannot be too earnest with God about spiritual blessings; but as to every thing of a temporal nature, temperance of mind becomes us; and, in resignation at his feet, we must endeavor to say—"Here I am: let him do what seemeth him good.

Assure me of thy wondrous love  
Immeasurably kind;  
And, Lord, to thine unerring will  
Be every wish resigned."

## AUGUST 21.—EVENING.

"Little children." 1 JOHN ii. 12.

THIS is a mode of address which, if not entirely peculiar to our Apostle, is employed by him with such frequency that it may be of use to inquire what he would imply or express by the appellation. When you meet with it, therefore, remember that it may intimate four things.

First, his advanced age. He had now "the hoary head;" and it was "a crown of glory," because it was "found in the way of righteousness."

Secondly, the affectionateness of his disposition. He was not only "the beloved," but "the loving" disciple; and seems to have imbibed very largely of

the spirit of him on whose bosom he leaned. It would be well if all who are engaged in the sacred office were distinguished by more of "the meekness and gentleness of Jesus Christ." Instead of insulting and menacing, it would be better for love's sake to entreat, and endeavour to win. Indeed there is no gaining the heart any other way. It cannot be forced—but it may be won—and "he that winneth souls is wise." This was the original method—"We were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children; so, being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the Gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us."

Thirdly, the effect of his usefulness. Many of them were his converts. He had begotten them through the Gospel: and he regarded them as his spiritual progeny; the most important and interesting of all offspring. Such children are indeed a heritage of the Lord—Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them: he shall not be ashamed, but shall speak with the enemy in the gate.

Fourthly, the character they were to display. He would have them resemble the qualities of little children. He would have them receive the kingdom of God like little children, who implicitly confide in their Father's declarations. He would have them, like little children, to depend on their father's care to provide for them; and be free from all anxiety and fear. In malice he would have them children retaining no resentments, and if angry easily pacified. He would have them free from pride and disdain; condescending to men of low estate: not ambitious and worldly-minded.

Whatever we may think of these things, we know how they are regarded by the Judge of all. “The disciples came unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.” From this Divine decision it is first obvious—that these attributes are not *natural* to us, but the effect of *conversion*; we *become* such. And secondly—that the change producing them is *indispensably necessary* to our hope; for *except* we be converted, and become as little children, we *shall not enter* the kingdom of heaven—We are without title and without preparation, and, as the same authority tells us in another passage, “we *cannot* see the kingdom of God.”

The conformity, however, is not to be universal. You are not to “be children in understanding,” but “full-grown men.” You are to be “no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.” Little children are fond of trifles, and will cry and fight for toys—But, says the Apostle, it shall not be so among you—“Little children, keep *yourselves* from idols. Amen.”

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AUGUST 22.—MORNING.

“The word of Christ.” Col. iii. 16.

So the Scriptures are called—because he is the author and—because he is the subject of their con-

tents. They are not only derived from the inspiration of his Spirit, but they are full of his person, and character, and sufferings, and glory. There is nothing perhaps, admitted into them but has some relation to him. We cannot, in many instances, trace this connexion at present: but we shall see more of it when, in the Church, the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be seven fold, as the light of seven days. And, perhaps, to explore it perfectly will be a part of the blessedness and employment of heaven. But when our Lord urged his hearers to search the Scriptures, he said, "They are they that testify of me." And, going to Emmaus with the two disciples, "he expounded unto them, in *all* the Scriptures, the things concerning *himself*."

We may divide the Scriptures into six parts.

There is the *historical* part. He is the substance of this. In Adam, we see him the head and representative of his people. In Noah, as the restorer of a new world. In Isaac, as a victim laid on the altar. In Joseph, as a sufferer and a saviour. In Moses, as a lawgiver. In Aaron, as a high priest. In Joshua, as a leader and commander. In Solomon, as the prince of peace. In Jonah, as buried, and rising from the grave.

There is the *ceremonial* part. Of this, he is the substance. He is the body of all its shadows, the reality of all its types. He is the rock, whose streams followed the Israel of God. He is the manna, the true bread that came down from heaven. In the City of Refuge, we behold him as our security from avenging justice. And in every bleeding sacrifice, as the atonement of our sins.

There is the *prophetical* part. Here he is all in all. “To him gave *all* the prophets witness.” “The testimony of Jesus is the *spirit* of prophecy.”

There is the *promissory* part—And how large and glorious a portion of it is filled with exceeding great and precious promises! What blessing can we need that is not furnished under the pledge of a God that cannot lie? “But all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him amen, unto the glory of God by us.”

There is the *practical* part. To be a Christian, is to live, not to ourselves, but to him that died for us, and rose again. Of good works, his example is the rule; his love is the motive; his Spirit is the author. He is the altar on which all our sacrifices are to be offered. Prayer is asking in his name. Morals are from him. We are to love our wives, even as he loved the Church, and gave himself for it.

There is the *doctrinal* part. And what is the great mystery of godliness? “God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.” Every doctrine of the Gospel, as treated by the inspired authors, leads to him. If we are justified, it is by his righteousness. If we are sanctified, it is by his Spirit. If the glory of God shines forth, it is in the face of Jesus Christ. Providence is all power given unto him in heaven and in earth. The whole of Christianity is called the “The truth as it is in Jesus.”

Take him out of the Bible, and you take the sun out of our world; and the soul out of the body.

It is this that so powerfully endears the Sacred Volume to every real Christian. It is the word of

One he supremely loves; and of one he feels to be infinitely necessary to all his comfort, and all his hope. Of him he can never read, or hear, enough.

O my soul! let this word of Christ dwell in thee richly in all wisdom. Never forget the admonition of kindness, as well as of authority: "Bind it continually upon thine heart, and tie it about thy neck. When thou goest, it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee; and when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee."

## AUGUST 22.—EVENING.

"David served his own generation by the will of God."

Acts xiii. 36.

EXAMPLE has a thousand advantages over every other mode of tuition. Hence God—for none teacheth like him—has filled his word, not by documents and dissertations, but facts; and, spreading before us the lives and actions of men, commands us not to be slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

We have here a noble testimony concerning David. In his early days he was in obscurity, being the son of a plain yeoman, in the village of Bethlehem, and employed in the humble occupation of a shepherd. But he was soon called to expose himself in the field of battle, and obtained for his countrymen an easy victory, by killing the wonder and terror of the age. After this—for as he rose he suffered—we find him in exile, under the persecutions of Saul, wandering and hiding himself in wildernesses for his safety, and hunted like a partridge upon the mountains. At length, through much tribulation, he entered his

kingdom, and was crowned, first over Judah, and then over all Israel. But after distinguishing himself as a warrior, and a ruler, he was compelled by the rebellion of Absalom to leave his palace and his capital, and ascend, weeping and barefooted, the Mount of Olives, where his son and his Lord, the Messiah, ages after, agonized and triumphed. Then we find him re-established in more power and authority than ever, and reigning in safety, peace, and honour—and at last we find him anxious to build a temple for the Name of the Lord, amassing an abundance of materials, and sparing no expense; so that he could say, “The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up.” From this glance at his life, we see that it was very eventful and singularly diversified. But in every period, and in every relation, and in every scene, he displayed principles and dispositions which rendered him not only civilly, but morally and religiously useful. In youth; in manhood; in obscurity; in splendour; in adversity; in prosperity; by his wealth; by his power; by his authority; by his wisdom; by his inspiration as a prophet; by his genius as a poet and a musician: in all his resources he constantly served his generation.

But he also served his own generation. Not indeed exclusively; for he has served every generation since. He is serving the present age. Christians now living, bless God for his writings. Who has not found in them a treasury of experience? a flame at which he has often lighted his torch? a harp that has often driven away his evil spirit? There are some who not only serve their own generation, but levy a tax of admiration and gratitude upon every future one. Such were the Reformers. Such were Luther,

and Calvin, and Knox, and others. And nothing can be more unjust than to censure these men who did so much, because they did no more; or diminish their fame by reproaching them with a few faults, which were rather the errors of the times than of the men. Such were those patriots who resisted unto blood, striving against sin, and procured for us the invaluable blessings of civil and religious freedom. Such were the translators who gave us the original Scriptures in English. Such have been the writers who have defended the truth of the Gospel, and furnished materials for private and domestic devotion. How useful is Watts, even now, by his Psalms and Hymns, in which millions bless God; and by his songs for children, which out of the mouths of babes and sucklings perfect praise! No man indeed knows how any good he does may be perpetuated and enlarged.

But if we cannot serve other generations, let us serve our own. Some strain too much after distant objects, and overlook what is immediately before them. Some leave large sums when they die—they had better be their own executors, and see and enjoy the application of their own liberality. They had better convince the world that they act from choice; for at death they can retain nothing, but *must* part with all they possess. The endowments bequeathed by many of our good forefathers have operated rather injuriously than otherwise; retaining the support of error in some places of worship, and relaxing the zeal and generosity of congregations in others; for people have an amazing keenness in perceiving when their assistance is not wanting, and some will do nothing themselves while they have any one to lean on. The cause of the poor and the cause of God

will be hereafter committed to others; they are now intrusted to us; let nothing draw us off from present duty.

He also served his own generation *by the will of God*. Nothing comes by chance in our affairs. The Lord determines the bounds of our habitations, appoints us our stations and offices, and assigns us our talents and opportunities. How obviously was it his pleasure that David should be what and where he was! It was all without his design or thought. And therefore when Saul's courtiers reproached him that he was a restless ambitious youth, who, dissatisfied with a private condition, sought to work himself into notice and eminence; he could appeal and say, "Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty: neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me. Surely I have behaved and quieted myself, as a child that is weaned of his mother: my soul is even as a weaned child." Others, too, without any purpose on their own part, or the part of their friends, have been laid hold of by the hand of Providence, and conducted forward so as to exemplify the promise, "I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known: I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight."

But it was not only by God's providential will that David served his own generation, but also by his revealed will. This he made the rule of his conduct. "Lead me," said he, "in thy truth, and guide me, for thou art the God of my salvation, on thee do I wait all the day"—like a servant, to receive and obey the orders of his master. We must not follow our own fancies, or do that which is most agreeable

to our feelings; but what God requires of us. For this purpose we must repair to his holy oracles, and ask, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" A woman is not to usurp authority over the man, and to teach in the church because she thinks her talent lies that way. A person is not to assume the office of the magistrate under a notion that he could discharge it better than he who now fills it. If a village preacher on the Sabbath leaves his own family without control and without instruction, he may be serving his own generation, but not according to the will of God. God enjoins us to abide in our own callings. If we step aside from them, we may be useful; but the effect is often equivocal; the good is more than counterbalanced by the evil arising from the violation of order, and God asks, Who hath required this at your hand?

Let this example induce our imitation. We all have it in our power to be useful; and let us see to it, that we decline not doing what we can, because we cannot do what we would. Let us immediately and earnestly call into action whatever influence we possess to serve our own generation by the will of God. They are all our brethren. Our generation serves us. None of us liveth to himself. All the endowments conferred upon us look beyond ourselves; and as good stewards, we are to minister the manifold grace of God. It is as much our privilege as our duty. It enthrones us in the esteem of our fellow-creatures, and with such sacrifices God is well pleased. When a Christian comes to die, he must be humble in looking back upon his imperfections; but he will have reason to be thankful, if by the grace of God he hopes that he has not wholly lived in vain. I,

said the learned Dr. Donne to his friends when dying, I repent of all my life, but the part of it I have spent in communion with God, and doing good to men.

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## AUGUST 23.—MORNING.

"Wait on the Lord, and keep his way, and he shall exalt thee to inherit the land: when the wicked are cut off, thou shalt see it."

Ps. xxxvii. 34.

HERE is a twofold admonition.

First. "Wait on the Lord." "I hope to do so." But are you *sure* of this? Is there any thing in your religious exercises that really deserves the name of waiting on God? For persons may read without attention, and hear without faith, and sing without praise, and pray without desire. They may draw nigh to him with the mouth, and honour him with the lip, while the heart is far from him. But God is a Spirit; and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth.—"I hope I do *thus* wait on him." But do you thus wait on him *sufficiently*? In the *sanctuary*? In the *family*? In the *closet*? In all your concerns—like David who said, On thee do I wait all the day, Lord!

Secondly. "And keep his way." This is beautifully connected with the former. Wait—and work. Wait—and walk. Get grace—and exercise it. Persevere in the use of means, if present comfort be withheld. Neither give up the course in which you are engaged—nor turn aside—nor stand still—nor look back—nor seem to come short; though superiors frown—and companions reproach--and ini-

quity abounds—and the love of many waxes cold—and numbers walk no more with you. In all opposition, and through every discouragement, let your soul follow hard after God. Thus did Job: and therefore he could say, "My foot hath held his steps; his way have I kept, and not declined. Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips: I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food." So it was also with the Church: "Our heart is not turned back, neither have our steps declined from thy way; though thou hast sore broken us in the place of dragons, and covered us with the shadow of death." We have enough to animate us to hold on—"After two days will he revive us; in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight. Then shall we know if we follow on to know the Lord. His going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth."

Here is a twofold promise.

First. "He shall exalt thee to inherit the land." God is the source of all elevation and honour. He raised the Jews to the possession of Canaan, the glory of all lands. He dignifies Christians with a title to a better, even a heavenly country; where, "with kings, are they upon the throne." He advances them here, as well as hereafter. For he is "the glory of their strength, and in his favour their horn is exalted." And he exalts them not only with regard to spiritual, but temporal things. For "the meek shall inherit the earth." Not that all of them are rich and great in the world. So far from it, they are commonly a poor and an afflicted people. Not that every thing is

actually in their possession, or that they have a civil right to it. Dominion is not founded in grace; but security is; peace is; contentment is; happiness is. And as to covenant interest, and enjoyment, and improvement, “all things are theirs.”

Secondly. “When the wicked are cut off, thou shalt see it.” And they will be cut off. They are often cut off, even in life, from their places, and riches, and prospects. At death they are cut off from all their possessions and comforts: for, poor as their portion here is

“Tis all the happiness they know.”

Yea, they are then cut off from all the means of grace, and the hopes of mercy. In the last day they will be cut off from “the resurrection of life;” and before the assembled world, they will hear the Judge irreversibly excluding them from himself, the source of all happiness—“*Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his angels.*”

Dreadful as the ruin is, there is nothing in it to alarm the *praying* and *persevering* believer. He will have no share in it. The vengeance that falls and crushes the foe will not, cannot touch the friend. He will only be a spectator and, strange as it may now seem, the sight will not affect his happiness. But is it necessary to go further; and represent it as a source of pleasure and delight? Surely it is enough that he will see it, and adore the mercy that graciously saved him: and *acquiesce* in the justice that righteously condemns others.

As the saint will only see the destruction of the wicked, so the sinner will see the salvation of the righteous, and not partake of it. But to see such a

blessedness ; to see what was once within his own reach, and is now enjoyed by others, must be a source of the keenest anguish. Such was the display of plenty to the interdicted nobleman at the gate of Samaria : "Behold, thou shalt see it with thine eyes : but thou shalt not eat thereof." And we know who has said, "There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and you yourself thrust out."

## AUGUST 23.—EVENING.

"And he said, Draw not nigh hither : put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground. Moreover he said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." EXOD. iii. 5, 6.

THIS address of God to Moses contains an admonition, to restrain and regulate him ; and an assurance, to establish and encourage him.

The admonition may be understood and improved as a check to vain curiosity. Here was much to excite the notice and surprise of Moses. The bush was burning ; but he saw no fire near it, or lightning from heaven to kindle it. He also saw what was more unaccountable still, that though it kept flaming, not a spray or a leaf was consumed. It does not therefore appear wonderful that he should have been tempted to turn aside to see this great sight. Yet it would seem he was not free from blame. He should have been satisfied with the prodigy, and have waited in adoration the development of the design : but he was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and wanted perhaps philosophically and speculatively to

explore “*why* it was not burned.” And therefore the voice cries to him, “Draw not *nigh* hither.” This curious desire of knowing things that do not concern us is too natural to all. But we should endeavour to repress it, rather than increase it by indulgence. In the common affairs of life, and the concerns of our fellow-creatures, it is an impertinent, troublesome, offensive disposition, and is sure to fix upon a person in time the odious character of “a tattler and a busy-body in other men’s matters.”

But it is yet more to be guarded against in religious affairs. Nothing can be more inconsistent with, and injurious to, that spirit of child-like submission which a Christian is to cherish. We have no time in the concerns of our souls for nice and useless speculation. One thing is needful, and whatever draws us off from this, even if it be something true and good in itself, will be an error and an evil to us. The grand principles of the Gospel are few and plain; and they are always held forth in their practical bearings, and no further. “The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever; that we may do all the words of this law.” Let us therefore be satisfied with the words the Holy Ghost useth, without requiring human definitions of them. Let us improve the parts of the Scripture as they lie before us, without systematizing them. Let us distinguish between the uses and the essences of the subjects the Gospel reports. Let us take the religion of the facts, and leave the philosophy. When the man asked, “Are there few that be saved?” did our Lord rebuke, or gratify, the inquirer? When even his disciples asked, “Wilt thou at this time again restore the

kingdom to Israel?" did he not answer, "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power"? In all such cases, did he not invariably say, "Draw not nigh hither"?

The admonition would also remind us of the humility and awe with which we should approach where God is. And in all our worship we come before him. Outward tokens of respect and reverence vary in different ages and countries. In the East, unshoeing of the feet was the same as uncovering the head with us; and Solomon refers to it when he says, "Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God." The act enjoins the principle which it is intended to express and cherish. Bodily exercise profiteth little; but we are complex beings, and we are to honour God in our bodies as well as in our spirits. Holiness becometh his house for ever. God will be sanctified in all that come nigh him. He is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints—"Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground."

But what says the assurance? "I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." God has always bestowed his favours in a way which shewed a regard for righteousness: he often therefore did good to some for the sake of others; and thus men were prepared to regard the importance of the Messiah, in whom all the families of the earth were to be blessed. When the Assyrians were pressing Jerusalem, "I will deliver it," says God, "for my servant David's sake." When Job's three friends had offended God by their improper speeches, God said to them, "Take unto you now seven bul-

locks and seven rams, and go to my servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt-offering; and my servant Job shall pray for you; for him will I accept: lest I deal with you after your folly." How often does he express himself in addressing the Jews, as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, because the covenant made with them was for their descendants: therefore, says Moses, "Only the Lord had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them, even you above all people, as it is this day." "Not for thy righteousness, or for the uprightness of thine heart dost thou go to possess their land; but that he may perform the word which the Lord sware unto thy fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." But the better covenant, of which all the spiritual Israel shall glory, was made with One who was before Abraham, whose goings forth were from of old from everlasting; and *they* are blessed "with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." Hence in the New Testament the language is changed, and we are constantly reminded of "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Surely even at this early period a future state was not unknown. When God said to Abraham, "I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward; I will be a God to thee;" he must have referred to something beyond the present life; how else was it fulfilled? Accordingly the Apostle tells us that Abraham "sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." Yea, says he, "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced

them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city." And hear how our Saviour argues with the Sadducees: "Now that the dead are raised, even Moses shewed at the bush, when he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." The relation was even then existing, though their flesh had seen corruption. Our Lord therefore applies it not only to prove an intermediate state, but also the resurrection of the dead: "For he is not the God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto him;" now, as to their spirits; and hereafter, as to their bodies; for purpose and accomplishment are the same with him.

Let us apply this to our own case. Have we been bereaved of pious connexions? The relation between them and their God and our God remains the same. Where now are their dear spirits? With himself in glory. Where are their dear bodies? Sleeping in the grave. But his covenant is with their dust; and the inviolable union into which he has entered with them assures thee, thy brother—thy child—thy mother—shall rise again. We shall be, we are still one with him and with each other—

"The saints below, and all the dead,  
But one communion make;  
All join in Christ, their living head,  
And of his grace partake."

## AUGUST 24.—MORNING.

"Smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered; and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones." Zech. xiii. 7.

We know who this shepherd was. God speaks of him in the former part of the verse, as "his fellow;" and calls him "his shepherd." He was God's shepherd, because he appointed him to take the charge of his Church, and to perform, on their behalf, all the duties implied in the pastoral office. Hence it was foretold of him, "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd; he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young." This character the Saviour applied to himself with an attribute of distinction: "I am the good shepherd." Paul styles him, "that great shepherd of the sheep." Peter calls him, "the chief shepherd," and "the Shepherd and Bishop of souls"—Let the language of my heart be—"Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon."

He was to be "smitten." Every one that enters this vale of tears is a sufferer. But he was "a man of sorrows;" and could say, "Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the *Lord* hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger." For, though he suffered from devils, who had their hour and power of darkness; and though he suffered from men—for, against him, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered

together—yet it was only to do whatsoever *his* hand and *his* counsel determined before to be done. It pleased the *Lord* to bruise him. *He* put him to grief. When, therefore, the Jews esteemed him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted, they were right in the fact, but mistaken in the cause. They supposed he suffered for guilt: and he did thus suffer; but the guilt was not his own. “He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.” Here let me contemplate the evil of sin in the sufferings of this divine Victim. And here let me dwell on that love, which passeth knowledge, that led him, all-innocent as he was, voluntarily to become a sacrifice on our behalf; and to suffer, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us unto God. The glory of the Gospel; the hope of the sinner; the triumph of the believer—all lies here—“It is Christ that died.”

It was a sad thing that his own disciples should abandon him, at the very moment he was going to die for them, and after all their professions of determined adherence to him. But when the shepherd was smitten, “the sheep were scattered.” In this desertion he was not taken by surprise; for he had previously said, “Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered every man to his own, and shall leave me alone.” Yet how much he felt it may be inferred from his lamentation and complaint: “I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforter, but I found none.” Let not his people count it a strange thing,

if they are betrayed or forsaken. It should remind them of the fellowship of his sufferings.

But behold an instance of forgiving mercy and renewing grace—"And I will turn mine hand upon the little ones." His disciples were little in the eyes of the world; and less in their own. They were few in number, and poor in condition. They were weak in faith and fortitude; and were now dismayed and desponding. But he did not give them over unto death. He knew their frame; he remembered that they were dust. As soon as he was risen from the dead, he appeared to them—not clothed in terror, but saying, "Peace be unto you." He exerted again the powerful influence of his Holy Spirit. He renewed them again unto repentance. He established their faith and hope. He gave them enlarged views, and fresh courage: so that they were ready to suffer and die for his Name.

Surely, a bruised reed will he not break; and the smoking flax will he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory. And in his Name shall the Gentiles trust.

## AUGUST 24.—EVENING.

"Renew a right spirit within me." PSALM II. 10.

THIS Psalm will always shew the reality and degree of the author's repentance; and will afford sentiments and language peculiarly suited to the sinner in his conversion to God at first; and to the believer, in his return after any departure from him through life.

The words which we have read speak of "a right

spirit." "A right spirit" is such a spirit as God requires, and takes pleasure in; and such a spirit as becomes the condition of those who profess to be his followers. It would be easy to prove that such a spirit must be a spirit of faith and trust: a spirit of contrition and humility: a spirit of thankfulness: a spirit of love: a spirit of patience and submission: a spirit of zeal; and a spirit of firmness and constancy. Such is the spirit produced in all the subjects of Divine grace.

But this right spirit may be injured and reduced. We see this was the case with David in consequence of his fall; and it was in a measure the case with him before: for we read of his "first ways;" and the words intimate that these were in some respects his best. Hezekiah, after his two great deliverances, which he felt so much at the time, "rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him; for his heart was lifted up." Jeremiah was to cry in the ears of Jerusalem, "Thus saith the Lord; I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown. Israel was holiness unto the Lord, and the first-fruits of his increase." The church of Ephesus had left her "first love;" and is called upon to remember from whence she was "fallen," and to do her "first works." Hence we have so many cautions and admonitions against declension in religion. And when we consider how adverse every thing within us and without us is to our better principles, and how the enemy of our souls employs all his devices to injure them, we need not wonder at the frequency of our hinder-

ances and declinings. The defections sometimes appear in gross falls: but let us not think too well of ourselves if we have been preserved from these, or suppose that backsliding consists only in foul and outward misconduct. There is “the backslider in heart,” as well as the backslider in life; and while we stand fair with our fellow Christians and our ministers, we may have much to lament before God in the loss of that spirituality, and fervour, and confidence, and delight in ordinances, which once distinguished our experience.

We also see that it is necessary when it is impaired to have it renovated. Nothing is right in religion if “the heart” be not “right with God;” and, therefore, says Solomon, “Keep thine heart with all diligence, *for out of it are the issues of life.*” We may go on in the performance of duty; but if “the right spirit” be wanting, the mere action is of little worth. The Lord looketh to the heart. Two donors may give alms; one from a principle of charity, the other from vanity: two attendants may repair to the same sanctuary; the one to seek and serve the Lord, the other led only by custom or curiosity: but how differently do they appear in the view of God, and how differently are they regarded by him! We act in the same manner towards our fellow-creatures as far as our knowledge extends. In what they do for us, we are affected by our apprehension of the spirit with which they are influenced. If we think the favour conferred be from esteem, or love, or gratitude, we prize it, however small; while, if it appears to originate in selfish design, we cannot value it however great.

But the want of a right spirit affects our comfort as well as our duty. We consider it an unfavourable sign in some professors, that they are so lively and cheerful. We should have much more hope concerning them if they felt fear and distress. We are sure that, if they belonged to God, he would reprove them in their defective walk, and improper temper, and hide his face from them till they acknowledged their offence. A Christian may get into a wrong spirit; but how differently does *he* feel! What a loss of peace and satisfaction does he sustain! How is his communion with God interrupted! and his delight in devotion deadened! He becomes also fretful with regard to others; fretfulness is generally the offspring of guilty sensation, arising from some neglect or misdoing. Then, uneasy within, we are pleased at nothing without; and so pour out in passion, or ooze in peevishness, like a continued dropping in a rainy day. We are never happy but as we have a right spirit within us.

But we here learn that when it is impaired it is God alone who can renew it. He giveth *more* grace. He is the God of *all* grace. As he begins, so he carries on the good work. He strengthens that which he has wrought in us. He perfects that which concerns us.

And therefore, lastly, we must go to him for this purpose, and pray, as David did, "Renew a right spirit within me." A life of dependence must be a life of application. A religion of grace must be a religion of supplication. If I want certain things, and *must* be supplied, and *cannot* derive them from myself, I shall surely repair to him who is able and

willing to succor me—especially if the exercise itself exerts an influence every way conducive to the revival and increase of religious principle—and this is the case with prayer; and if he has established it as the medium of his communications, and said, “For all these things will I be inquired of;” and if he has pledged himself that we shall not call upon him in vain. And is not this his own promise, “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find?” “O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come.”

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## AUGUST 25.—MORNING.

“O Thou that hearest prayer, unto Thee shall all flesh come.”

Ps. lxxv. 2.

We have no claims upon God; and are not worthy of the least of all his mercies. It is therefore surprising that he should hear prayer at all. But he glories in it; and by nothing is he so much distinguished. He derives his fame, his character, from it—“O Thou that hearest prayer!”

And we need not wonder at this, when we consider—How constantly he has heard prayer: even ever since men began to call upon the name of the Lord.—And how many prayers he has heard. If we are to pray without ceasing, the prayers of one individual would be very numerous. What then is the aggregate multitude, that has been offered by all the millions that ever sought his face! And how *largely* he answers prayer. He gives grace and glory, and withholds no good thing pertaining to life and godliness.—And how *readily* he answers prayer. “Be-

fore they call," says he, "I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear."—And how *certainly* he hears prayer. We have his promises, which are firmer than the earth and the heavens. It may not be easy to ascertain when, or how, he answers us, as the God of our salvation; but this we know, that he cannot deny us, without denying himself. He cannot lie: and he has said, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened."

What should be the influence of this glorious truth: "Unto thee shall all flesh come?" If these words had stood separately, we should have taken them as affirming, that all flesh would come to him at the last day to be judged. But the reference is not to God on the judgment-seat, but on the mercy-seat: and it is well that we can kneel at the latter, before we stand at the former. The meaning is, that men shall seek to him in *prayer*. And not some, but *many*. Not many, but *all*. Surely here is nothing less than a prophecy of the calling of the Gentiles. Not only shall the seed of Jacob, his chosen, seek unto him; but those also that were strangers to the commonwealth of Israel, and without God in the world, crying only unto idols that could not save. The Jews, in latter times, were carnal, and selfish, and averse to the extension of their privileges: but the more ancient and spiritual of their nation rejoiced in the prospect of it. And they had intimations from the beginning, that the Gentiles, also, should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of the promise of Christ, by the Gospel—"All nations

whom thou hast made shall come and worship before thee." "My house shall be called the house of prayer for all people."

If the practice here insured is to result from the character here expressed, the character must be known. "For how can they call upon him, in whom they have not believed? And how can they believe on him of whom they have not heard?" Accordingly, it is said, "From the rising of the sun, even unto the going down of the same, my Name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering."

And, to notice this more personally, we see of what importance it is to entertain encouraging views of God. Confidence in his mercy and grace will alone draw us into his presence. And therefore the ground of this confidence must be firm and obvious.

Much advantage, also, upon this principle, must result from reviews of our own experience of his goodness. All success is animating, especially in prayer. "Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live."

—Let *me* come to him among *all* those that are coming. And let *me* come immediately. For there is a time when he will not hear prayer. "Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer: they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me."

## AUGUST 25.—EVENING.

"THE REVELATION of Jesus Christ." 1 PET. i. 13.

THE display of *him* is every thing. Be it therefore observed, that "the revelation" of him is fourfold: and though the last of these manifestations be here intended, all of them may be properly and usefully noticed in their order.

The first revelation of him we call Scriptural. This began very early, even in Paradise. There the Sun of righteousness dawned, and from thence shone more and more unto the perfect day. He was announced as the seed of the woman, and the bruiser of the serpent's head—Then, as the seed of Abraham, in whom all the families of the earth were to be blessed—Then, as the Shiloh of Judah, to whom the gathering of the people should be—Then, as the Son of David, and his Lord. Of him, Moses, in the Law, and the Prophets, did write. He was held forth not only in words, but types. He was seen in Moses as a prophet, in Aaron as a priest, in Joshua as a conqueror, in Solomon as the prince of peace, in Jonah as dying and rising again. Every bleeding sacrifice expressed him as an offering for sin; the manna from heaven, and the water from the rock, as the bread and water of life; the tabernacle and temple, as the residence of divinity, in whom dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. This exhibition of him may be likened to a perfect portraiture of a most distinguished and endeared personage, at full length, rolled up on the side of a room, and which the owner gradually opens to the beholders, till the whole figure stands

disclosed—So God gradually revealed the Desire of all nations, while his delighted and wondering Church exclaimed, “He is fairer than the children of men”—“Yea, he is altogether lovely.”

The second revelation of him is incarnate. “God was manifest in the flesh.” “For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he should destroy the works of the devil.” “We know that he was manifested to take away our sins, and in him was no sin.” Thus he was not only declared, but perceived. He appeared not in vision, but in person. Not tremendously, as in the giving of the Law, when even Moses said, “I exceedingly fear and quake;” but familiarly, “clothed in a body like our own.” Not transiently, as when he paid visits to his people of old, but by a continuance of three-and-thirty years—for “the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us—full of grace and truth.”

The third revelation of him is spiritual. And we call it spiritual because it is produced by the Spirit of God in the spirit of man. It is expressed by sight—Not a carnal sight of him; not a sight of him by the eye of sense, but by the eye of faith, according to the words of our Saviour; “He that seeth the Son, and believeth on him, hath everlasting life.” It is such an acquaintance with him as draws forth our admiration, excites our love, gains our confidence, and secures our obedience. It is what Paul means when he says, “It pleased God to reveal his Son in me”—and which he prayed for an increase of when he said, “That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death.”

The fourth revelation of him is glorious. After

all he is now much concealed. There are hundreds of millions of our fellow-creatures who know nothing even of the existence of such a Being. Even where he is professedly known, there are multitudes to whom he has no form nor comeliness, nor any beauty, that they should desire him. Even among those who wear the name of Christians there are many to be found who deny his divinity, renounce his redemption, and ridicule the operations of his Spirit. Thus he is despised and rejected of men. This, to those who know his Name, and put their trust in him, is humbling and distressing. But they are relieved and cheered with the thought that it will not be so always. They believe that the number of his admirers is increasing. They are sure that he will be exalted and extolled, and be very high: that he will sprinkle many nations; that all nations shall fall down before him; and the whole earth be filled with his glory. They know also that there is a day approaching, called, by way of distinction, "the day of Christ;" "the revelation of Jesus Christ." He will then appear the second time without sin unto salvation. He will come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him. We shall see him as he is. He will be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe. Then his grandeur will be acknowledged. Then his love, power, patience, and truth; his character as a Saviour; his tenderness as a friend; his dominion as Lord of all, will be developed: and he will enter, accompanied by a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, a world where he will attract every eye, and engage every tongue; and saints and angels will unite with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that

was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing."

But what is to be expected at the revelation of Jesus Christ? "THE GRACE THAT IS TO BE BROUGHT UNTO YOU."

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#### AUGUST 26.—MORNING.

"THE GRACE THAT IS TO BE BROUGHT UNTO YOU at the revelation of Jesus Christ." 1 PETER i. 13.

Two inquiries may here arise.

What does "the grace" here spoken of mean? It comprehends the fulness of the promise, "I will come again and receive you to myself, that where I am, there ye may be also"—His changing their vile bodies and fashioning them like unto his own glorious body—His absolving and acknowledging them before an assembled world—His commendation; "Well done, thou good and faithful servant"—His invitation; "Come, ye blessed of my Father"—His placing them in a state of blessedness, which far transcends all our powers of expression and conception. After all our knowledge derived from Scripture and experience, it doth not yet appear what we shall be—"Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." It is a glory which *shall be* revealed.

But why is it called *grace*? Why is it not said, "*The glory* that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ"? May it not be—first, to exclude merit from all share in attaining it? There is only one Being who reigns in heaven by his own

right. Jesus deserved his throne, and could claim it on the ground of worthiness. But we are not worthy of the least of all God's mercies. How then could we claim an immensity, an eternity of riches and honour? If we look for a reward, it must be a reward of grace. Our work bears no proportion to the recompence. If our obedience was perfect, it could not be meritorious, because it is due to God: but our services are really full of defects and defilement; and therefore, if they were dealt with according to their desert, they would be rejected. To which we may add, that all our good works are performed in the strength of the Lord: we live and walk in the Spirit. Every one therefore that knows himself will say, with the Apostle, "By the grace of God I am what I am: not I, but the grace of God which was with me." And we are sure "the top stone of the spiritual temple will be brought forth with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it."

And, secondly, may it not be so called to shew the identity of grace with glory? They are not only so intimately and inseparably connected, but so greatly resemble each other, and are so essentially the same, that the one is interchangeably used for the other in the Scripture. Thus Paul calls glory grace, when he says, "We are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord:" meaning, advancements from one degree of glory to another; or, as it is elsewhere expressed, being "renewed day by day," or going "from strength to strength" in the Divine life. And here Peter names glory grace. In fact, grace is glory in the bud, and glory is grace in the flower. Grace is glory in the

dawn, and glory is grace in the day. But the morning and noon are produced by the same sun; and the bud and flower issue from the same plant.

Let us remember this—That glory is nothing but the completion of what grace begins. It is the perfections of those principles, dispositions, services, and enjoyments, by which Christians are distinguished even in this world. Have we any thing of heaven in us already? It will be a state of sinless purity—Do we delight in holiness now? It will consist in the society of the godly—Are they our dearest companions now? Death changes our place, but not our state, not our nature. The change, to a Christian, is a change not in quality, but degree. He has now the foretastes of the bliss; the firstfruits of the harvest; the earnest of the inheritance—“He that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given to us the earnest of the Spirit.”

What then is our duty in the prospect of the event? For the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ, “GIRD UP THE LOINS OF YOUR MIND, BE SOBER, AND HOPE TO THE END.”

#### AUGUST 26.—EVENING.

“GIRD UP THE LOINS OF YOUR MIND, BE SOBER, AND HOPE TO THE END for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” 1 Pet. i. 13.

OUR duty with regard to this event is expressed three ways. First, confirmation of principles—“Gird up the loins of your mind.” The loins are the seat of physical strength. It is said of Behemoth, “his strength is in his loins.” If the loins of a man yield,

his body soon fails. When therefore he is weary, nature instinctively teaches him to put his hands on his loins, as if to support them. And hence the bandage or girdle worn about the loins by those who would prepare for strenuous exertion of any kind. In reference to which, says another Apostle, "Let your loins be girt about with truth." It is not necessary that a man should make up his mind firmly upon every inferior opinion; but if he be loose in his leading principles in religion, he will never excel. There may be a foundation without a superstructure; but there can be no solid and safe superstructure without a foundation. Wherein does the profiting of those appear who think it is a matter of little importance what a man believes? And how do we read the Scriptures? "Buy the truth and sell it not." "Exhorting them to continue in the faith." "Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines, for it is a good thing that the heart be established *with grace*."

Secondly temperance of attachment—"Be sober." Some would think, to enforce such an article as this was not preaching the Gospel—and it may not be preaching *their* gospel; but when Paul spake "concerning the faith in Christ," he reasoned concerning righteousness, *temperance*, and judgment to come." Others thinks this order only regards excess in eating and drinking. Sobriety intends nothing less than this; but it comprehends much more, at least in the Scripture. One would suppose that common decency, and a regard to life and health, would restrain a man from gluttony and drunkenness. But a Christian is to moderate all his appetites and passions. He

is not to be indulgent in sleep ; nor suffer this downy foe to rob him of too much of his time. He should consider sleep an infirmity rather than a privilege. It is humbling to think of dying half our time to be alive the rest—Angels are nobly free from this mortifying necessity. We should be sober in all our affections and pursuits as to earthly things. Our Lord speaks of our hearts being overcharged, not only with surfeiting and drunkenness, but the cares of this life—These may morally intoxicate. And as wine oppresses the senses, disturbs reason, and hinders us from any thing useful ; so worldly anxieties besot the mind, and unfit us for every good word and work. Paul exhorts “young men to be sober-minded.” And we see in our day how well they are exemplifying this—How suspicious they are of their own judgments—How disposed they are to consult the aged and the experienced—How backward they are to decide or speak upon every difficult subject ! He also admonishes women to “adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety.” And how well it is to see this also so fully verified “in women professing godliness.”

Thirdly, constancy of expectation—“And hope to the end.” There is nothing more desirable or necessary than this. We not only rejoice in hope ; but “we are saved by hope.” It keeps our hearts and minds from the allurements and seductions of the world : and it sustains us in trouble ; being, as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast.

Yet it is no easy thing to maintain the full exercise of hope ; especially under those trying dispensations which seem as if the Lord was angry with us to

destroy; and also under a sense of our unworthiness, arising from our unprofitableness and deficiencies. These ought to humble us. But we must not cast away our confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. There is enough to bear up our hope in every change of condition, and under every moral infirmity, in the promises of the Gospel, and the fulness of the Redeemer. And the time of trial is limited. Though we are to hope to the end, the end is not far off: "yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry." Then the burden will be removed from the shoulder. Then the warfare will be accomplished. Then we shall be with him, where he is, to behold his glory. Then we shall be filled with all the fulness of God. "Be patient, therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh."

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## AUGUST 27.—MORNING.

"Yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindnesses, and in mercies." HOSSEA ii. 19.

IN the covenant of grace, there is God's part, and there is our part. But God—or it would never be accomplished—undertakes for the latter as well as the former. He engages to do all that is necessary *for* his people, and—in them.

Here is the *nature* of the connexion he will esta-

blish with them—"I will betroth thee unto me." And the manner of it—"In righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindnesses, and in mercies."

First. I will do it, says He—in righteousness. He is holy in all his ways, and righteous in all his works. But the soul that sinneth, it shall die. Righteousness, therefore, seems to require that he should punish them, rather than admit them into his favour. And awakened souls want to see a way in which God is just, as well as the justifier. And he has provided for this. He tells us in the Gospel, that though sin is pardoned, it is also condemned; and that though the transgressor escapes, the curse falls upon another, who, by bearing it himself, redeems us from it, and is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. The law, therefore, instead of being injured, is magnified, and made honourable; and even more glorified than it would have been by the destruction of the sinner. In the sinner's destruction, justice would have been always satisfying, but never satisfied. Whereas the satisfaction was now completed at once, "by the one offering up of himself." Then also justice would only have been displayed passively; but now, it is displayed actively too. Then it would have been displayed only in them; but now it is also displayed by them. Then they would have hated, and execrated it for ever; now they love it, and delight to extol it. For righteousness here is not to be taken only for the way in which he makes the guilty just, but the way in which he makes the depraved holy. This comes from the same gracious agency; and is equally necessary with the former; as he could not admit them to communion with himself while in a state of sin—For "how can two walk

together except they be agreed?" And "what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness?"

Secondly. In *judgment*. The heathens placed Meroury, the god of wisdom, by the side of Venus, the goddess of marriage: and for good reason; since there is nothing in which judgment is so needful. Yet few things are entered upon with so little discretion and reflection. Hence the wretched consequences that ensue. What can be expected from those hasty and thoughtless matches, in which adaptation, age, temper, and even piety, are all overlooked? But the Lord is a God of knowledge: he knows what he does; and why he does it. He has reasons, which justify the measure to his own infinite understanding. Hence salvation is called his counsel; in which also he is said to abound towards us in all wisdom and prudence. And this is true, not only as to the contriving and procuring of it; but also as to the applying. The place, the time, the manner, the means of their conversion, will all evince, when known, that his work is perfect, and his ways judgment. We see but little of this now. Yet there are openings into it which carry the mind away in contemplation and surprise; and which assure us much more remains for our discovery and rapture in the world of light. This applies also to his people, as well as to God. Their choosing him and consenting to his gracious proposals will bear examination. It is wisdom; and wisdom which is justified of all her children. The world may censure; but they are able to give a reason for the hope that is in them. The spiritual judgeth all things, though he himself is judged of no man.

Thirdly. In *loving-kindnesses*. Without this, it were better for persons never to come together. The

parties mutually need it; and need it daily. They should be filled with tenderness, to bear and sympathize with each other; and the law of kindness should rule in all their looks, words, and actions. This is seldom wanting on the female side. Their love is not only more pure and disinterested; but more fervent and undeclining; and better prepared to endure privations and sacrifices. Men are fond of power and authority; and therefore they are commanded, not to govern them—this they will do readily enough; but to love their wives, and not be bitter against them. God says to his Church, “*You shall find me full of tenderness and compassion. I know your frame, and remember that you are dust. I will pity your infirmities, and spare you. If I afflict, it shall not be willingly. If I chide, I will not contend for ever. I will look to the heart, and judge you according to your meaning, and your desires.*”—It would seem strange to apply the exercise of this quality to *them*, as well as to him. Kindness towards God seems too low an expression; but he himself has sanctioned it: “*I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, and the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown.*” Every thing they do for him, he takes kind at their hand: and their ingenuous disposition will make them fearful of grieving his Holy Spirit; and anxious to walk worthy of him unto all pleasing.”

Fourthly. In *mercies*. This is distinguishable from the former. *That* was the effect; *this* shews the cause; and it is mentioned, in addition to loving-kindness, to remind us that all we possess, or expect,

springs solely from the free and undeserved grace of God; and also to meet those discouragements to which we are always liable, from a sense of our unworthiness and ill-deservings. There is not a just man on earth that liveth and sinneth not. In many things we offend all. What humiliations must a Christian feel, when he reviews even his Sabbaths, and holy communions! and when he compares his proficiency with his obligations and advantages! But God will not cast away his people; but have mercy upon them according to the *multitude* of his *tender* mercies. This is children's bread; and the children of God will not, cannot abuse it. Yea, the more they are persuaded of this truth, the more holy, and cheerful, and vigorous they will be in the performance of duty. Grass that grows in orchards, and under trees, is of a sour quality; it wants the sun. Fruits that grow in the sun are richer and riper than those which grow in the shade. The best frame we can be in is, to be upholden by a free spirit, and to act under a full sense of our divine privileges. Let us therefore sing of the mercy of the Lord for ever; and if he ever *seems* to have forgotten to be gracious, let us plead with him, and say, "Where is thy zeal, and thy strength, the sounding of thy bowels, and of thy mercies towards me? Are they restrained?"—Here again the import includes, not only that we receive mercy, but exercise it, not towards him personally—this is impossible, and he needs it not. But his creatures need it; his people need it. And what is done to them he will consider as done to himself. And what so just and proper as that they who are forgiven should forgive. And that they who live by mercy should be merciful?

AUGUST 27.—EVENING.

"Heirs.—" TITUS iii. 7.

IF we properly observe those who are Christians indeed, we shall find in them a peculiarity that distinguishes them from, and an importance that ranks them above, all other creatures. What an assemblage of qualities, excellences, and advantages, must they possess, to do any thing like justice to the various and numberless representations, by which they are held forth to our view and admiration in the Scriptures of Truth! Let me contemplate them under the character of *Heirs*.

As such we may consider them in the *grandeur of their estate*. A man may be heir to a cottage, or a large domain, or even a throne. But what is the inheritance of Christians? In one place they are called "heirs, according to promise." In another, "heirs of the grace of life." In another, "heirs according to the hope of eternal life." In another, "heirs of salvation." In another, "heirs of the kingdom, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him." Paul prays that the Ephesians may be enlightened to know it: and speaks of "the hope of their calling;" and "the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints." The inheritance of the worldling, who has his portion in this life; the inheritance of the Jew, in Canaan; the inheritance of Adam, in Paradise; the inheritance of angels, in heaven; all come far short of the believer's expectation. At present, it cannot be fully either described or conceived—It doth not yet appear what we shall be.

We may consider them in the *solidity of their title*.

No person ever had a claim to an estate so clear and decisive as the Christian has to his inheritance. He may not, indeed, be certain of it in his own mind. There is a difference between a right, and the perception of it. An heir, by reason of his tender age, or infirmity, or disorder, may be unconscious of what awaits him. And Christians may be ignorant and fearful. They may condemn themselves, when God has justified them freely from all things: and they may conclude that they have no part nor lot in the matter, while yet their title is as valid as the word and oath of God can make it. It is also perfectly inseparable from the birth that makes them new creatures: for they are born of God; and, "if children, then heirs; and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ;" and, being one with him, their heirship is as undeniable as his.

We may view them, also, in the *certainty of their possession*. An heir, who has had the clearest and fullest title to an estate, has yet never enjoyed it. To take possession of it, perhaps he had to cross the sea, and was wrecked. Or he travelled by land and was murdered. Or, in reaching maturity, he fell a prey to one of the many diseases to which humanity is liable. Or, if *he* was preserved, the estate was destroyed: for there is no place of security on earth. Or if the estate was not destroyed, it was *usurped*, and by fraud and villainy alienated from its lawful owner. How many figure away, only in the rights of others? But what shall hinder the Christian from realizing his hope? His inheritance is incorruptible and undefiled, and fadeth not away, reserved in

heaven for him, where danger never comes. And the heir is as safe as the estate; being “kept by the power of God through faith, unto salvation.”

But observe these heirs in the circumstances of their *minority*. For there is a period of nonage: and “the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; but is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father.” Before this season arrives, he must submit to many restraints, not pleasant to his feelings, and the reasons for which he cannot fully appreciate. Yea, there may be cases in which he may even be constrained to borrow from a domestic or neighbour, who has none of his expectancy. And Christians must not reckon that their present indulgences will equal their future reversions. They are now under a course of discipline, in which they must exercise self-denial, and appear less favoured than many around them. But they rejoice in hope—and not only so—but, as the heir has something more from his estate than the prospect of it; as he has education and attendance becoming his rank; and remittances, to enable him to live answerable to his destination; so Christians have now supplies from their riches in glory; and are training up, under a Divine Teacher, for the sublime spheres they are to fill; and their ministering spirits do always behold the face of our heavenly Father.

And what is the *deportment* that becomes these heirs? It ought to be ennobled. Holiness is the true dignity of the soul; and sin, its vilest degradation. They are, therefore, to “have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness; but rather reprove them.”

—And, oh! the infinite delicacy of the Gospel! They are to “abstain from the very appearance of evil.”—It ought to be humble and grateful. They were, by nature, only children of wrath. If their relation is glorious, it is derived entirely from grace. There were difficulties in the way of their adoption, which God alone could remove—“I said, How shall I put thee among the children, and give thee a pleasant land, a goodly heritage?” But he removed these obstacles by the sacrifice of his own Son, and the renovation of his own Spirit; and, poor and vile as they were, he raised up the poor out of the dust, and lifted the needy from the dunghill, to set them with princes, even the princes of his people. It ought to be very cheerful and happy—

“A hope, so much divine,  
May trials well endure.”

But so inferior are natural things to spiritual, that when the one are applied to the illustration of the other, they teach us as much by contrast as by comparison. What then, is the *difference* between these and earthly heirs? In other cases, the inheritance is diminished by the number of co-heirs. Here the multitude of partakers, instead of injuring, increases the blessedness of each possessor. In other cases, the father dies before the child inherits. Here, the father never dies. In other cases, the heir by dying loses his inheritance. Here, by dying, he gains it: it is then he comes of age. In other cases, an estate passes from hand to hand. Here is no succession: it is our heritage for ever. “This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord: and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord.”

## AUGUST 28.—MORNING.

"Iniquities prevail against me: as for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away." PSALM lxv. 3.

THIS is the language of complaint and of triumph. It was uttered by a Jew; but every Christian can make it his own. For as, in water, face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man, in every age, and under every dispensation.

As to the complaint, there are two ways in which iniquities may prevail against the Christian. The first is in the growing sense of his guilt. This may be occasioned by afflictions, which bring our sins to remembrance; or by any thing that increases self-knowledge, for this must always shew us more of our unworthiness and depravity. Suppose a man in a dungeon abounding with noxious reptiles. While all is dark there, he sees none of them; but, as the light dawns, he begins to see them; and, as the light increases, he sees more of them. The light seems to bring them, and to multiply them; but it only discovers what was there before. Some pray that God would shew them *all* the corruptions of their heart: but this would probably drive them into distraction or despair. They could not bear the whole disclosure, especially at first; and therefore they are made sensible of them by little and little.

The second is in the power of their acting. This prevalence cannot be entire; for sin shall not have dominion over them: but it may be occasional and partial. An enemy may make a temporary irruption, and do injury, though he may soon be expelled again. In a war, checks and discomfitures are not incom-

patible with general and final success; as we see in the history of the Romans. The Israelites were repulsed at Ai: but they returned to the assault, with more caution and wisdom, and succeeded. And thus whatever advantages the foe may gain *against* Christians, the God of peace will bruise Satan under their feet, shortly. David does not say, Iniquities prevail *with* me; but *against* me. As to many, they prevail with them. *They* drink in iniquity, as the ox drinketh in water. *They* draw iniquity with cords of vanity, and sin as it were with a cart-rope. But a Christian is made willing in the day of God's power; and therefore can say, "To will is present with me: but how to perform that which is good, I find not. When I *would* do good, evil is present with me." Ahab is said to have sold himself to work wickedness. But it is otherwise with a poor slave in Africa. He is kidnapped or taken by force, and disposed of to some demon-trafficker in flesh and blood. He resists, and weeps; but they prevail *against* him. And, says Paul, I do not sell myself, but I am sold under sin—So then, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me—O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me! Poison in a serpent never produces sickness: but it does in a man: it is natural to the one, but not to the other. Sin does not distress the sinner; but it offends, beyond every thing else, the renewed mind.

The words are broken and abrupt: but when the Church adds—"As for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away"—they are, assuredly, the triumph of faith, after a plunge of distress, and a pause of thoughtfulness. There are two ways, according to the Scripture, in which God purifies our transgres-

sions; and they always go together. The one is, by pardoning mercy. Thus David prays, "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities." Thus the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin. And they that believe on him are justified from all things.

The other is, by sanctifying grace. "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you." And this is as much the work of God as the former. He subdues our iniquities, as well as forgives them. He not only ordains peace for us, but works all our works in us.

The Christian is *persuaded* of this gracious deliverance: and therefore expresses himself with confidence. And a foundation is laid for this confidence; and such a firm and Scriptural foundation, as that he may feel himself perfectly safe in the midst of danger. Under the deepest sense of his desert, he may joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom he has now received the atonement; and with regard to all the conflicts of indwelling, he may take courage, and sing—"I shall not die, but live: and declare the works of the Lord.

' My spirit holds perpetual war,  
And wrestles and complains;  
But views the happy moment near  
That shall dissolve its chains.'

' Cheerful in death, I close my eyes,  
To part with every lust:  
And charge my flesh, whene'er it rise,  
To leave them in the dust.' "

## AUGUST 28.—EVENING.

"And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season: his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper." PSALM i. 3.

THE heir of this promise is described in the preceding verses: "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night." "*He*" is the person whose condition and prospects are here displayed by images the most pleasing and instructive—

"*He* shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water"—Here we see how he came to be found in a situation so favoured. He was not there naturally; but "planted" there. And this was done by a Divine hand: "for they shall be called trees of righteousness, *the planting of the Lord*, that he might be glorified."

But see the advantage of the situation itself—He is planted "by rivers of water." It means, an affluence of resources necessary to growth. The deficiencies of Christians cannot be charged on Christianity. They are not straitened in their condition, but only in themselves. These rivers of water mean two things. First, the means of grace. Though these would not be efficient of themselves, there is a subjective suitableness and tendency in them to do us good; and they are appointed for this very purpose; and we may look for the Divine blessing in the use of them. They who undervalue prayer, reading the Scriptures, private meditation, Christian intercourse, the preaching of the word, and the

table of the Lord, shew little concern for soul-prosperity: but they who are diligent in the proper use of them will be fat and flourishing, and not only have life, but have it more abundantly. Secondly, the Spirit of grace. Divine ordinances are good, but Divine influences are better. Every Christian has what the Apostle calls "the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ." And so ample and rich as well as necessary is this supply, that we are said to "live in the Spirit," and "walk in the Spirit," and to be "filled with the Spirit."

Of such a privileged individual three things are here spoken. First: "He bringeth forth his fruit in his season." From a tree planted in dry and scorching sand it would be unreasonable to look for produce; but not if planted by rivers of water. As God provides for the fertility of his people, he expects it; and he is not disappointed. They have all the fruit of the Spirit; love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. He finds it indeed in various degrees: for all the trees are not of the same size and age; but there is not one barren among them. A tree has his time for bearing; and it is enough if he bringeth forth his fruit in his season, his natural, proper, and appointed season. So it is with a Christian. He is required indeed to be always abounding in the work of the Lord; but this does not hinder the special claims of particular periods. As we have opportunity, we are to do good. We are to be humble when we are applauded; to be liberal when riches increase upon us; to possess our souls in patience in adversity; and under bereavements to say, The will of the Lord be done.

Secondly, "His leaf also shall not wither." The leaf is a part of the composition of a tree in its perfect state. It is produced and nourished by the same sap that feeds the fruit. It even aids the fruit by moisture and by shade, and adds to the beauty of the tree, which, without it, would appear naked, cheerless, and uninviting. We read of trees whose leaves are for healing. The leaves of others afford a covering from the heat, so that persons may sit under their shadow as well as partake of their fruit. Here we approve of the application of "the sweet Psalmist" of our Israel—

"Green as a leaf, and ever fair,  
Shall his *profession* shine ;  
While fruits of holiness appear ;  
Like clusters on the vine."

In trees bearing fruit, leaves are not sufficient without it; but as accompaniments and additions they are valuable. A form of godliness is nothing without the power, but the power cannot properly dispense with the form. When profession results from principle, it is not only ornamental to religion, but useful to ourselves and others. And when the Christian appears what he really is, when he not only gives himself to the Lord, but to his people, by the will of God, when he not only believes with the heart, but confesses with the mouth, and holds fast not only the reality but the profession of his faith without wavering, he is the tree whose "*leaf also* shall not wither." We have evergreens; but none of our fruit-bearing trees are such. All these with us, at the approach of winter, drop their verdure, and remind us of our decay and mortality; "we all do fade

as a leaf." But in warmer climes there are trees which retain their foliage by constant and fresh vigour all the year. And there are Christians that exemplify this. The profession of many is undurable: it has no root in themselves: it is not sustained by any internal and vital succour: it is influenced only by outward excitements, which often fail; and thus even all their pretensions are given up. But God puts his Spirit within his people, and thus causes them to walk in his statutes. The water he gives them is in them, and springs up into everlasting life. One of the finest sights in the world is a Christian at the end of a long course with an unsullied reputation, not only sincere, but without offence, and still alive to the things of God—His hair may be white, but his leaf is green—and the hoary head is a crown of glory, being found in the way of righteousness.

Thirdly: "Whosoever he doeth shall prosper." Here the metaphor ends. Exertion cannot be ascribed to a tree. Some indeed would carry on the figure, alleging that the word "doeth" admits of being rendered "beareth;" and so they would read—"And whatsoever he beareth shall prosper;" that is, it shall not be blasted or blighted, but shall reach maturity. But this had been previously insured. Our translators saw no propriety in this change. They knew that God's word is not bound by the rules of human criticism; and that metaphors should not be carried too far. It is wise to know when to drop them. The assurance addresses itself to a common feeling in our nature—it is hope of success that induces men to labour. Who, if he knew it,

would exert himself in vain? To a Jew such an address would be peculiarly suited; as, on his obedience, prosperity was invariably to attend. With regard to the Christian, the promise cannot be taken without some distinction. In his temporal enterprises he is not authorized to look for success in all he does. His plans and wishes may often fail: but his welfare requires this; and all things work together for good to them that love God: while success is sure to attend him in his spiritual affairs. There he cannot labour in vain. He prays, and he shall prosper in it; "for he that seeketh findeth." He fights, and he shall prosper in it; for "his enemies shall be found liars unto him, and he shall tread upon their high places." He sows, and he shall prosper; for "they that sow in tears shall reap in joy"—**AND WHATSOEVER HE DOETH SHALL PROSPER.**

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AUGUST 29.—MORNING.

"So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham." GAL. iii. 9.

THE outward distinctions of life awaken the envy of some, and gender discontents in others. And yet how little depends upon them! All that is essential to the real welfare, and chief happiness of man, lies open to all who choose to avail themselves of it. All cannot become scholars; but all may be made wise unto salvation. All cannot acquire wealth; but all may gain the unsearchable riches of Christ. All cannot walk upon the high places of the earth; but all may be great in the sight of the Lord. Abraham,

the founder of the Jewish nation, was considered the most dignified and indulged of the human race: yet every Christian, however poor and despised, stands related to this extraordinary character, and is blessed with him—“If ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.” “They which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.” “So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.” And how was he blessed?

He was *justified*. And blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered: blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin. For him there is no wrath to come; no sting in death; no curse in affliction. But came this blessedness upon Abraham only? What saith the Scripture? “Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.” So then they that be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham—And are all authorized to say, “Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Abraham was called the *friend of God*; and was called so by God himself: “Thou, Israel, art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend.” If Eusebius held it such a privilege to be the friend of Pamphilus; if Lord Brookes so gloried in the distinction as to have it inscribed upon his tomb—

“HERE LIES THE FRIEND OF SIR PHILIP SIDNEY”—

what was the honour of Abraham in being acknowledged the friend of God! Yet such honour have all the saints. They are not only pardoned, but admitted to intimacy. They walk with God. His secret is with them; and he shews them his covenant. In all their afflictions he is afflicted. He loveth at all times; and will never leave nor forsake them. "So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham."

Abraham also was blessed with *usefulness*. "I will bless thee," says God, "and make thee a blessing." This was done not only in the descent of the Messiah from him in whom all the families of the earth were to be blessed eventually; but by his prayers, and instructions, and example, and exertions, and influence, wherever he came. Thus also are all believers blessed. Not one of them is useless. They are disposed to do good; and their desire is gratified. They are qualified to do good; and, as stewards of the manifold grace of God, they serve their generation by his will. They are the salt of the earth, to preserve; the light of the world, to inform; and a dew from the Lord, and as showers upon the grass, to cool, and refresh, and revive, and fertilize—"I will save you, and ye shall be a blessing."

Abraham was *divinely protected*; and God said to him, "I am thy shield." "I will bless him that blesseth thee; and I will curse him that curseth thee." He preserved him in his going out and coming in. He covered his head in the day of battle, when he rescued his kinsman Lot. He suffered no man to do him wrong; yea, he reproved kings for his sake, saying, Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophet no harm. And thus, though many rise up

against believers, and they feel themselves to be perfect weakness, their defence is of God, who saveth the upright in heart. He is their refuge and strength; a very present and all-sufficient help in trouble. They are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation: therefore they need not fear what their enemies can do unto them.

Abraham had not only a divine protection, but an *infinite portion*: “I am,” says God, “not only thy shield, but thy exceeding great reward.” This necessarily includes what God was to do for him beyond the grave. It could not have been fulfilled in this life. When we find him, a few years only after this assurance, sickening and dying, and laid in the cave of Machpelah, we are constrained to ask, Is this the reward, the great, the exceeding great reward, consisting, so to speak, of God himself? Ages after this, God said to Moses, at the bush, I *am*—not I *was*—but I *am* the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob. The relation, therefore, remained; for “he is not the God of the dead, but of the living.” They were then living, as to their spirits; and would as certainly live as to their bodies in the resurrection, as if it had already taken place. Hence the reasoning of the Apostle: “By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.” “And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath

prepared for them a city." Our Saviour also allowed him to be in glory; and even represented heaven by a union and intimacy with him: "The beggar died, and was carried by angels into Abraham's bosom." And nothing less than this is the glad and glorious destination of every believer. For they that be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.

The grand inquiry therefore is—"Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" For we have access only by *faith* into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

For they that are not of faith are cursed with—the faithless nobleman, to whom it was denounced, "Thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not taste of it"—And "with the faithless Jews, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness; and who could not enter in because of unbelief"—And "with hypocrites and unbelievers, where there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth."

## AUGUST 29.—EVENING.

"For thou hast a little strength." Rev. iii. 8.

THIS is the language of Christ to the Church of Philadelphia. It is obviously spoken in a way of commendation and encouragement. Though they were distinguished by no great attainments, there was something in them really good and spiritual. He therefore would not deprive them of the privileges they enjoyed, but would even enlarge them: "I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it—for thou hast a little strength, and hast

kept my word, and not denied my Name." It is thus he comes down like rain on the mown grass. It is thus he verifies the prediction, "a bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory."

It would be an abuse of this passage were we, in consequence of it, to become remiss in duty, and, as the Scripture says, "to settle upon our lees." It shews a low aim, and is even an unfavourable proof of a man's sincerity, when he only seeks to be satisfied of the existence of his religion. We ought to be anxious, not only to have life, but to have it more abundantly. We should be concerned for the honour of God, and our usefulness to men. By the weakness of our grace we lose much in a way of evidence and comfort. We are commanded to "grow in grace;" and are assured that God "giveth more grace." Indeed the principle naturally urges the progress; and they who have tasted that the Lord is gracious will desire the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby.

But the declaration does afford "strong consolation." And such consolation the Apostle tells us is necessary, not only to them that are fleeing, but "to them that have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before them." It is no easy thing, when persons are pressed down by a sense of their vileness and imperfections, to keep them from fearing that they have no part nor lot in the matter, and that their hearts are not right in the sight of God. They are prone to judge of the truth of their grace by the degree of it; and lose the comfort derivable from what they have, in thinking of what they have not. Comparing themselves with saints of great eminence, and dwin-

dling into nothing before *them*, they forget that in the household of faith there are various ages and statures; and that those who are not "fullgrown men" may be "little children." The fold of the heavenly Shepherd contains not only sheep, but lambs; and he gathers the lambs with his arm, and carries them in his bosom.

The weakness of our grace should therefore humble us, but not drive us to despair. While we lament that we have not more, we should be thankful that we have any. Though the mixture is lamentable, the Lord will not reject the ore for the dross adhering to it; and will in due time separate the one from the other. As soon as it is sown we say, This is a field of wheat. The blade is not the full corn in the ear, but it will become so—"Four months, and then cometh harvest." If it be but the dawn with us at present, the dawn, though less than the day, is better than the night, and proves that the sun is rising, and at hand; and what shall stop his course, or turn him aside? And "the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

What a lovely being have we before us! He is fairer than the children of men! Let us give him all the confidence of our hearts. Let us admire, and praise, and recommend him.

And let us be concerned to imitate him. Hence it is said, "Be ye followers of God as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also loved us." Is he forgiving, and meek, and condescending, and tender, and compassionate? As the professors of his Name, let the same mind also be in us: and let us remember, that if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is

none of his. If we resemble him, we shall not despise the day of small things. In our social state as a church we shall not exact perfection; and if we have not all the satisfaction we could desire, we shall lean to the side of candour, and receive one another as Christ receives us. If we are strong, we shall bear the infirmities of the weak, and not please ourselves. We shall give up things in which we could conscientiously indulge ourselves, lest we offend the consciences of our weaker brethren. We shall not press young beginners with high and difficult doctrines, but patiently wait till experience prepares for the admission of them. He taught his disciples as they were able to bear it. Milk is for babes: who could think of giving them not only strong meat, but the bones of controversy, which, if they happen to have a little flesh upon them, or marrow in them, are beyond *their* use? If a brother also be overtaken in a fault, let us restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, considering ourselves, lest we also be tempted, and thinking of him who took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses. Let us always have a word in season for the weary. Let us comfort the feeble-minded. Let us make straight paths for our feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed. Blessed Jesus! Beholding as in a glass thy glory, may we be changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord.

## AUGUST 30.—MORNING.

"Pass the time of your sojourning here in fear."

1 PET. i, 17.

From these words, I might consider the nature of the Christian life—which is *a sojourning here*: and also—the *time* appointed for it. But let me rather reflect upon the *manner* in which I am to pass the one, in accomplishing the other—"Pass the time of your sojourning here *in fear*." This cannot intend every kind of fear, without making the Scripture inconsistent with itself: for how often does it forbid fear!

We must not, therefore, give way to apprehensions of any thing we may suffer from our fellow-creatures, in following the path of duty. Here we should boldly say, "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear what man can do unto me." "Fear not," says the Saviour—mentioning the extremest case, "Fear not them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do." And this Paul exemplified: "None of these things move me; neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy." When Peter and John were threatened if they spake any more in the name of Jesus, they replied, We have nothing to do with consequences: we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard: we ought to obey God rather than man; and he has commanded us to preach the Gospel to every creature. So should it be with us. We are not, indeed, to run into sufferings for our religion; but we can never go on well in divine things till we are delivered from the fear of man, that bringeth a

snare. What is it but this that produces so many concealments, and defections, and inconsistencies, in those who know what is right, and are excited by their convictions; but have not courage enough to resolve and proceed? Perfect love casteth out this fear.

We are equally to shun a distrustfulness of God's word. This fear is at once the most dishonourable to God, and injurious to our own souls. It robs us of comfort, and lays open the mind to temptation; as we see in Abraham, who, in a moment of unbelief, prevaricated, and debased and exposed himself in Gerar. Having the assurance of God in any case, we should feel no uncertainty as to the result; it must be accomplished; we have something firmer than the earth and the heavens to rely upon. But we may fear, not—whether we shall perish in the way everlasting; but whether we are in it. Not—whether the promise will fail; but whether we are heirs of the promise. This the Apostle even admonishes—"Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of us should seem to come short of it." This is a case too important to be taken for granted. The consequences of mistake are remediless; and the possibility, yea, the probability of it is great. It will therefore be better to err rather on the side of solicitude, than of security.

A servile fear, too, is not to be cherished. This may, indeed, precede something better: but if our fear of God begins with the judge, it must end with the father. It argues a very low degree of religion when a man can only be held to duty, like the slave, by the dread of the lash. We have not, says the Apostle, received the spirit of bondage again to fear,

but the Spirit of adoption. The slave is converted into the child; and God spares him as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.

But there is a proper and all-important fear, which God has engaged to put into the hearts of his people, that they may not depart from him—It is a fear of respect, and esteem, and gratitude. It regards not only God's greatness, but his goodness. There is, therefore, nothing irksome in it. It is compatible with consolation and joy; and the first Christians walked in the fear of the Lord, and in the comforts of the Holy Ghost. It is in reality the same with affection: it is the love which an inferior bears to a superior; the love of a dutiful child to a parent; or of a good servant to a master; or of a thankful dependent to a benefactor. This shews itself much in a way of reverence, and obedience, and attention. Hence, the more I love God, the more I shall fear him; the more I shall dread to offend him; the more I shall study to please him; the more I shall ask, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? the more I shall pray, "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer."

There is also a fear of caution, in which it becomes us to live. This regards sin. Sin is the greatest evil to which we can be exposed. And we may see enough in the case of David to make even a good man stand in dread of it. For though God put away his sin, as to its future penalty, yet it was ever before him in the sufferings it occasioned. The sword never departed from his house. He was filled with dread of divine abandonment. He was deprived of his peace and joy. His bones were

broken; and his tongue was struck dumb. And a holy God will always cause the backslidings even of his own people to reprove them, and make them know that it is an evil and a bitter thing to sin against him. He will cloud their hope, and destroy their comfort; and perhaps quarter troubles upon them for life. Reputation, which is the produce of years, may be ruined in a moment; and the effect of a thousand good actions may be lost by one evil deed. He who has befriended religion may cause the way of truth to be evil spoken of, and become a judgment on the whole neighbourhood in which he dwells.

And are we in no danger of this? Read the Scriptures. See the falls of good men; and men eminently good. Have not we a subtle and active enemy always at hand? Have we not a wicked world without us? Have we not an evil heart within us? Owing to our remaining depravity, are we not liable to be ensnared by every thing we come in contact with, however harmless in itself? If we think caution unnecessary, we have the greatest need of it: for "pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall." Be not highminded, but fear.

If we would maintain this frame of mind, let us walk circumspectly; not as fools, but as wise. Let us not be anxious to rise in the world, and gain the affluence which will require a moral miracle to preserve us. "He that makes *haste* to be rich, shall not be innocent." "They that *will* be rich fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all

evil; which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."

—Let us keep our mouth with a bridle. In a multitude of words there wanteth not sin.

—Let us not run into perils, uncalled of God—We are only authorized to look for his protection when we are brought into them in the discharge of duty. And, while we watch, let us also constantly pray—"Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe." "BLESSED IS THE MAN THAT FEARETH ALWAYS."

## AUGUST 30.—EVENING.

"He shall sit and rule upon his throne." Zech. vi. 13.

A THRONE is literally the seat of a king, and therefore the emblem of royalty. Solomon's throne was made of ivory and gold; it was six steps high; and had the same number of lions on each side of it; so that "there was none like it in any kingdom." But a greater than Solomon is here. And a greater than angels—"Of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire: but unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." In the year that Uzziah died, says the Prophet, "I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple."—And the Evangelist makes no scruple to

add, “These things said Isaiah when he saw *his* glory and spake of *him*. ”

Yet, however sublime and unrivalled, it is *his* throne. He has dearly earned it; and he sees in it the travail of his soul—Because his soul was made an offering for sin, he sees his seed, and prolongs his days, and the pleasure of the Lord prospers in his hand—Because he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, God hath highly exalted him, and given him a Name above every name. But it is *his* not only by divine ordination, but by the suffrage of his people. They are all made willing in the day of his power. They all acknowledge, with shame and sorrow, “O Lord, other lords beside thee have had dominion over us:” but they can all avow, “Henceforth by thee only will we make mention of thy Name”—

“Jesus is worthy to receive  
Honour and power divine ;  
And blessings more than we can give  
Be, Lord, for ever thine.”

Faith is our amen to God’s testimony, especially as it concerns the record that he hath given to us eternal life, and that this life is in his Son. It brings us into *his* views and designs; and by enabling us to adopt them it makes them our own acts and deeds—And hence *we* are considered as doing what *he himself* does: “The children of Judah and the children of Israel shall be gathered together, and appoint them one head, and they shall come up out of the land.”

Many, if they ascend a throne, can hardly be said to sit and rule there. They are soon hurled from it

by violence, or they drop from it by weakness. And if they continue awhile in it, they have little pleasure or repose: they are filled with cares and fears, and cannot do the things that they would. The sovereign of a hundred and twenty-seven provinces labours hard till the going down of the sun to save his prime minister, but in spite of him Daniel is thrown into the lions' den. What a wretch is Ahab, who, though king of Israel, is sick, and can neither eat nor drink, because he cannot get a few feet of garden ground from a faithful subject whose principle he ought to have admired!—But Jesus "*shall sit and rule upon his throne.*" This intimates successful government, established dominion, continued possession, full enjoyment. The King of Zion will never be deposed; will never die. Nothing can impede him; nothing shall perplex him; nothing shall induce him to change his proceedings—His enemies shall be made his footstool. He has enemies; but he rules in the midst of his enemies. It comports with his plan to suffer them to continue and to oppose him for a time; but he has them in derision, and can more easily destroy them than a giant can dash in pieces with a rod of iron a potter's vessel. He will display his wisdom and power in correcting their designs; he will make all their efforts to subserve his own purposes—The wrath of man shall praise him; and the remainder of wrath will he restrain.

For though his spiritual empire at present be limited, yet let two things be remembered—First, his real dominion is universal. He is not only the King of saints but the King of kings, and the King of nations. All creatures are his servants, from a

worm to an archangel. Not only are the treasures of grace his, but the elements of nature, and all the dispensations of Providence. He has power given him over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as the Father hath given him. He is head over all things to the Church. And this was necessary; for unless all things were put under him, how could he make them all work together for the good of his people? Yet this is the case; and it will be a noble part of our future employment and pleasure to trace the correspondences, and to acknowledge that all his ways have been mercy and truth.

Secondly, though at present his spiritual kingdom be limited, and the subjects who obey him from the heart be comparatively few, it will not be so always, nor will it be so long. He shall have the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession. “Yea, all kings shall fall down before him, all nations shall serve him.”

Let the prospect and the assurance enliven our exertions and encourage our hope—“Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King.”

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“I will betroth thee unto me for ever.” HOSEA ii. 19.

How well is it said of Christians, “Ye who sometimes were afar off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ!” They are not only pardoned, but employed in his service. They are not only reconciled, but admitted into friendship and intimacy. Yea, they are not only friends and favourites, but they are his

bride—"I will betroth thee unto me." And observe the permanency of the relation: "I will betroth thee unto me for ever."

"Permanency," says the poet, "adds bliss to bliss." How is every possession and enjoyment without it impaired in value! Yea, the more important any acquisition be, and the more necessary we feel it to our happiness, the more alive are we to apprehension of danger; the more averse are we to absence; the more painful is separation; the more intolerable is the thought of loss.

Yet to whatever we are attached here, do we not set our "hearts on that which is not"? It is said the Jews, in their nuptial ceremony, always threw a glass upon the ground, to signify that the union then forming was as frail as the emblem was brittle. Without the figure, there is enough, if we are wise, to remind us of the fact: and well does the Apostle reason, when he says, "Brethren, the time is short: it remains, therefore, that they who have wives be as though they had none."

We take each other—"till death do us part." And the relation is terminated by death—not the death of both—but the death of either. What then is the tenure of the treasure? What is our life? It is even as a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. Has God given you a companion in the days of your vanity? Rejoice; but rejoice with trembling. Perhaps already the wife has been called to give up "the guide of her youth;" or the husband, "the desire of his eyes;" with whom they once took sweet counsel together, and walked to the house of God in company!

But Christians can never be in a widowed state.

They can never lose their defence, their glory, their joy. There is nothing precarious in the transactions of God with his people. "I know that whatsoever God doeth it shall be for ever; nothing can be put to it, and nothing can be taken from it." How delightful, in a world of changes, to know that He changeth not; and, therefore, that we shall not be consumed! Every thing seems reeling around me, and sinking beneath my feet: but I have hold of something firmer than the heavens and the earth. It is the word, the oath of eternal Faithfulness, and Truth. "For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed: but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee." "I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." I have had many a persuasion which has failed me, because though the confidence was strong, the foundation was weak. But here the full assurance of faith can never do justice to the certainty of the event. "I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

## AUGUST 31.—EVENING.

"And he shall be a priest upon his throne." Zech. vi. 19.

In the Jewish economy kings were not priests, nor priests kings. The offices were always separated.

God divided them between two tribes and two families. The diadem was given to Judah, and the censer to Levi. The one belonged to the house of David, the other to the house of Aaron. And so evil and dangerous was it to unite them, that when Jehoash dared to burn incense, his hand withered, and he was taken out of the temple a spectacle of Divine displeasure. But Jesus is anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows: he combines these functions and dignities; and is "*a Priest upon his throne.*"

Something of this kind had indeed occurred before the law, in the case of Melchisedec. He was priest of the Most High God; and he was also king of righteousness, and king of Salem, which is king of peace. Hence the Apostle considers this wonderful character as a greater type of the Messiah than any of the Aaronical order—because he was not only to officiate as a priest, but to rule as a king.

Now let us look after the fact; and we shall see that he never appeared in one of these offices without exemplifying the other. Do we view him when he was more peculiarly the Priest? That is, in the days of his flesh, when his whole life seemed a sacrifice, and he died upon the cross? But do we here see the priest only? Does not the king also appear? Did not the wise men from the East come to worship him as born King of the Jews? Did not the winds, and waves, and diseases, and devils, yield him subjection? And when he poured out his soul unto death, did not the sun, and the earth, and the rocks, and the graves, adore him? Did he not by a look turn the heart of Peter? Did he not promise the dying thief a place

in Paradise with himself? And did he not rise the Lord both of the dead and living?

Or do we view him when he seems more peculiarly the king? That is, after he was received up into heaven, and was crowned with glory and honour, and had a name given him above every name? But do we here see the king only? Does not the priest also appear? Did not John see him "clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle"? Did he not see Jesus "in the midst of the throne as a lamb that had been slain"? Did he not hear the songs of the blessed, saying, "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us unto God by thy blood"? Do not his ministers preach him as crucified? Does not his own supper shew forth his death? Yea, says the Apostle, if he were on earth he would not be a priest. There he performed the sacrificial part of the office: but he performs the intercessory and benedictory above, where he ever liveth to make intercession for us, and commands the blessing, even life for evermore—Thus he is a Priest upon his throne.

Whence, O my soul! see the nature of our condition since the Fall. How necessitous is it! and how various as well as numerous are our wants! We are ignorant, and need enlightening; enslaved, and need redemption; guilty, and need pardon; unholy, and need renovation; lost, and need all the salvation of the cross and the throne.

—And what a multiplicity of excellences and influences do I behold in the Lord Jesus! "Thou art fairer than the children of men."

## SEPTEMBER 1.—MORNING.

"The word of life." PHIL. ii. 16.

THIS is a representation of the Gospel; and it well deserves our notice. All life is valuable; but there are several kinds of it, rising above each other. There is vegetable life. This is superior to mere matter; as a tree is more excellent than a stone. There is animal life. This is superior to vegetable; as a bird excels a tree. There is rational life. This is superior to animal; as a man excels a bird: for man was made a little lower only than the angels. There is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding. Yet there is a life superior to rational. It is called the life of God; a life from which we are naturally alienated; but to which all the subjects of divine grace are restored by the Saviour, who came, not only that we might have life, but have it more abundantly. It will be completed in heaven; but it is begun here. The case is this. Man, by transgression, is dead in *state*; for cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them. He is also dead in *nature*—or, as the Apostle expresses it, dead in trespasses and sins. But the Christian is passed from death unto life—He is no longer exposed to condemnation; for he is justified by faith, and has peace with God. And he is no longer under the power of moral death; for he is quickened, and made to walk in newness of life. "I compare," says he, "my present with my former experience. I was once dead to divine things; for they no more im-

pressed me than sensible things affect a dead corpse. But now, for the very same reason, I hope I am alive; for these very things *do* affect me; *do* interest me; *do* excite in me hope and fear. I am susceptible of spiritual joy and sorrow. I live, for I breathe the breath of prayer. I feel the pulse of sacred passions; I love and I hate. I have appetite; for I hunger and thirst after righteousness. I walk, and I work; and, though all my efforts betray weakness, they evince life."

But what will this life be, when there shall be no more death—when the body shall partake of the immortality of the soul—when both shall be glorified together—in a perpetual duration of knowledge, purity, friendship, riches, and glory?—This is life eternal!

Now the Gospel is called the word of this life; and it has four relations to it. A relation of *discovery*—for it reveals the reality and excellency of this life; the way in which it is obtained; the source from which it flows; and every particle of information we have concerning it. A relation of *conveyance*—for it communicates and produces this life. A relation of *support*—for it is the means not only of begetting this life, but of maintaining and increasing it. Therefore it is considered as its food; adapted to all stages of its being: milk, if we are babes; strong meat, if we are men. A relation of *order*—it is the rule by which this life is governed as to doctrine, worship, experience, exertion. To this rule all our religion must be brought: and as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.

## SEPTEMBER 1.—EVENING.

"And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read." LUKE iv. 16.

To a man of reflection, feeling, and piety, it will always be interesting and impressive to come to the place where he had been brought up. How many events will revive, and rush over his mind! It will be well if he be not afflicted with instances of early depravity, and be made to possess the iniquities of his youth. He must be grateful—"Here I was sustained in infancy, and preserved in childhood." Here "the length of my days" made the outgoings of my mornings and evenings to rejoice. The scenery remains the same—the river, the hills and the vale, the wood and the lawn—but how changed am I, in my connexions, prospects, opinions, and feelings! and how many who once knew me, know me no more for ever!

No being ever returned to such a place, and with such sentiments, as He who was fairer than the children of men.

What was Nazareth? A small country town among the Zebulunites in Galilee, seventy-two miles north of Jerusalem, and west of Mount Tabor. It was so reputeless for achievement and excellency, that when Philip said to Nathanael, "We have found him of whom Moses in the Law, and the Prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of Joseph;" Nathanael incredulously exclaimed, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?"

But how came he to be brought up in this place?

Here indeed he had been conceived of the Holy Ghost: for Mary lived at Nazareth when the angel Gabriel came unto her and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. Yet he was born in Bethlehem Judah, according to the prophecy of Micah. “But the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him. When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt; and was there until the death of Herod. But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeareth in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel: for they are dead which sought the young child’s life. And he arose, and took the young child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus did reign in Judæa, in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go thither: notwithstanding, being warned of God in a dream, he turned aside into the parts of Galilee: and he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene.”

And how was he here brought up? The Scripture is little adapted to gratify our curiosity. A veil is thrown over the private life of Jesus which it is impossible to draw aside. Nothing can be more idle and absurd than the Popish legends concerning his infant manners and miracles. “And when he was

twelve years old he was found in the temple, in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them and asking them questions; and all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers”—“And he said unto Joseph and Mary, How is it that ye sought me? Wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?” “And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them.” “But his mother kept all these sayings in her heart.” “And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man”—This is all the Holy Ghost has seen fit to communicate concerning the first thirty years of his life. He had no public education; and therefore it was asked by those who could not be ignorant of the fact, “How knoweth this man letters, never having learned?” And as Joseph and Mary were poor, it is not likely that he lived in indolence: nothing is so inconsistent with a Christian life as doing nothing and having nothing to do. His reputed father was a carpenter, and once the name is applied to himself. We are sometimes amazed, considering the brevity of his life, that he should not have entered on his ministry till his thirtieth year. But it was the same with his forerunner, John, whose life was yet shorter. God’s thoughts are not our thoughts: and we are unable to assign, without presumption, full and precise reasons for any of his dispensations. But surely we may learn that importance and usefulness are not confined to publicity—that we must be willing to be hid as well as displayed—that a great work requires much preparation—and that before we teach we must learn—“not a novice, lest, being lifted up with pride, we fall into the condemnation of the devil.”

But, seeing this was the place where he was brought up, why is it said, "and he came to Nazareth"? Because he had been absent. He went to Bethabara, beyond Jordan, to be baptised of John. After this he was forty days and forty nights in the wilderness, tempted of the Devil. Then he "returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee: and there went out a fame of him through all the region round about. And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all." The case was this. Though he was full of courage, he was to deal prudently. He knew that a prophet is not without honour, save in his own country and among his own kindred. Familiarity, if it does not produce contempt, reduces veneration. They who have seen a man in his youth, and mingled with him in common life, are less likely to reverence him as a teacher of religion. It might have been supposed that our Lord would have furnished an exception to this proverb, owing to his wisdom and sanctity—But what to many are wisdom and sanctity—yea, and Divinity too, if unconnected with worldly recommendations? He knew what was in man, and was acquainted with the prejudices of the Nazarenes against him. And therefore he did not begin his public career at home. For a considerable time he visited other parts; till, by his preaching and miracles he had acquired a renown which would serve favourably to introduce him among his townsmen and relations—Thus he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up—

And what did he there? "He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day." Surely his example has the force of a law to all his followers; especially as

we are here informed that it was "his custom" to do this. But do all who wear his Name constantly observe "the holy of the Lord," and repair to "the place where his honour dwelleth," for devotion and instruction? Are they not often detained by trifling excuses, which they know, and their domestics know, would keep them from nothing—but the sanctuary? Surely these things are as proper for us as for him; and we need the frequency of them as much as he did—

"And he stood up for to read." Reading the Scriptures was always a part of the synagogue service; and it tended much to maintain the knowledge of Moses and the prophets. It deservedly and commendably occupies a large share of the Liturgy of the Established Church. It should be a part of our employment whenever we assemble and meet together for the worship of God. It is a great advantage to the ignorant and illiterate, who cannot read for themselves. It honours the written word as the supreme authority in our religion. It removes prejudice, by shewing the people where the preacher finds his doctrine, and that even his language harmonizes with the words the Holy Ghost useth. It solemnizes the mind, and prepares the heart for devotion and instruction.

Let us be always in time for this part of Divine service.

And let us love the Scriptures, and read them more than we have done in our closets and in our families. They are the charter of our privileges, the warrant of our hopes, our guide and guard through the wilderness, our song in the house of our pilgrim-

age. “More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.” This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.”

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## SEPTEMBER 2.—MORNING.

“Holding forth the word of life.” PHIL. ii. 16.

THE Apostles did this supernaturally. They received their commission immediately from God; and were preserved from all mistakes in delivering his counsel; and could work miracles in confirmation and in defence of it.

Ministers do this officially. They pretend to no original communications from God, no new discoveries; they derive what they publish from the Scriptures; and they call upon you to prove whether these things are so. Yet their preaching is a divine ordinance—a work which an angel might covet; the simple design of which is—to hold forth the word of life.

But there are many ways of doing this common to all Christians. And *they* are the persons the Apostle here addresses. They may hold it forth by their *profession*. This is not to be considered as a substitute for experience, but as flowing from it. Experience is a secret thing between God and their own souls: but their religion is to be visible, as well as

real. They that are in darkness are to shew themselves: and we are to confess with the mouth, as well as to believe with the heart, unto salvation. They may hold it forth by *example*. This must evince the sincerity, and conduce to the efficacy, of your profession. You are required to walk worthy of the avocation wherewith you are called: and to constrain others, by your good works which they behold, to glorify God in the day of visitation. Nothing is so eloquent as the silence of a holy, consistent, and a lovely life. Actions speak louder than words; and by these you can cause the way of truth to be evil spoken of, or adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things. It is thus *all* can be “holders forth,” whatever be their condition, and without leaving their place and station. This is the way in which servants are to preach to their masters and mistresses, and children to their parents—Indeed, with regard to all of us,

“ *Thus shall we best proclaim aloud  
The honours of our Saviour God :  
When the salvation reigns within,  
And grace subdues the power of sin.* ”

This is not, however, to hinder express exertions. By these, when the life is in accordance with them, much may be often done. There are few so situated and limited as not to have some opportunities and influences by which they may be useful, and in a much greater degree than they are aware of, if they will seize them with simplicity, and diligence, and prayer. The talents of men are various; but the servant who has only one talent will be condemned if he

wraps it up in a napkin. When we cannot do much individually, we can do something by joining with others, and recommending and aiding those institutions which aim at the diffusion of the cause of Christ. We cannot translate the Scriptures into other tongues; but we can circulate them. We are not at liberty to go abroad ourselves; but we can be fellow-helpers to the truth, by contributing to missions. Silver and gold we have none; but we can apply to those who have. We are not donors; but we can be collectors.

What should induce us to hold forth the word of life? Interest. The regard we pay to the Gospel will bless ourselves; for, like its Author, it says, Them that honour me I will honour. We seldom labour in vain in this work; but if our efforts should prove successless, in some way or other they will return into our own bosom. The most respected and the most happy Christians are the unselfish, the active, the fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.

Benevolence. The Gospel is not only wonderful, but all-important. It is the Gospel of our salvation. It is the bread, the water, of life. For dying souls, it is the only remedy. It has done more already for even the public welfare of nations than all the civil institutions of men: and by this alone will the wilderness and solitary place be made glad, and the desert rejoice, and blossom as the rose.

Piety. It is thus God's perfections are displayed. It is thus his enemies are to be diminished, and his subjects increased. It is thus his kingdom comes.—And what claims has he not upon us for our service? Whose are we? Who bought us with a price?

Our relation in the Church. Why have we joined

ourselves to a religious society, and placed ourselves under the ministry of the word? Is it only to commune together in privilege? Is it not also to co-operate together in usefulness?—

## SEPTEMBER 2.—EVENING.

"The people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits." DANIEL xi. 32.

THESE words stand in the midst of a prophecy respecting Antigonus, that bitter enemy of the Jews. A recital of his cruelties would harrow up all our feelings. Suffice it to observe, that God would never permit such monsters to exist could he not bring good out of evil, and make the wrath of man to praise him. "O Lord, thou hast ordained them for judgment; and, O mighty God, thou hast established them for correction." As fire separates the dross from the ore, and the fan expels the chaff from the wheat, so persecution serves to distinguish between the true servants of God and mere professors. Hence this tyrant would discover the faithless Jews: "And such as do wickedly against the covenant shall he corrupt by flattery"—But not so with the upright in heart. Their piety would be unyielding and invincible, resisting his usurpations, and defying his menaces and sufferings: "But the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits."

"Exploits" are rare, difficult, remarkable, and illustrious actions. And for these God's people are prepared by their *knowledge* of him, and the *strength* they derive from him. They are not common characters, but a peculiar people. They "do more than

others:" they are "men wondered at." Noah builds an ark, and sails over a deluged earth. Moses divides the Red Sea, and fetches water out of a flinty rock. Elisha made iron to swim. Elijah carried the key of the clouds for three years and six months, and drought and rain came at his bidding. Joshua ordered the sun to stand still while he finished his victory. "And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthah; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: and others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; of whom the world was not worthy."

They have done, therefore, exploits as sufferers. And here we need not refer to the book of martyrs, but to common and private life. The afflictions of the righteous have been often many and peculiarly trying; but they have surprised the world, who were ready to deem their experience and conduct under them unaccountable and incredible. They have not only submitted, but acquiesced; they have not only exercised patience, but "all longsuffering

with joyfulness." When "troubled on every side," they have "not been distressed." Yea, they have "gloried in tribulation also:" and been able "in every thing to give thanks." We admire those who magnanimously bear the necessary excision of a limb. But the Christian himself is the operator, as well as the subject: *he plucks out his right eye; he cuts off his right hand; he crucifies the flesh with the affections and lusts.*

They have done exploits as scholars. It would be deemed no easy thing to acquire an entirely new language, especially when advanced in life. But we have known Christians, even after they have been old, acquiring "the language of Canaan," not a word of which they knew before, and speaking it fluently, and with little of their native dialect. Deciphering is a difficult act. Dr. Wallis, the celebrated mathematician, was many months ascertaining from the characters the sense of a French despatch which had fallen into our hands. But Christians can read and explain the most perplexing dispensations of Providence, and can discern the salvation of God, even in the hand which seems lifted up to destroy—"Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." "To the upright there ariseth light in the darkness."

They do exploits as merchants. They traffic not for time, but eternity. They trade not to the ends of the earth, but beyond the heavens. They deal not in corruptible things, such as this world's goods, but in all spiritual blessings. They run no risks, but are sure to gain unsearchable riches. One bargain alone is enough to signalize and immortalize them: "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant

man, seeking goodly pearls: who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it."

They do exploits as travellers. The march of the ten thousand Greeks under Xenophon; the journey of the Israelites from Egypt to Canaan under Moses; the return of the Jews from Babylon to Jerusalem under Zerubbabel were in the eye of angels far inferior to the passage of a soul from a state of nature into the glory that shall be revealed. What a distance to reach! What difficulties to pass through! What an end to attain!

They do exploits as warriors. Is it a great thing to take a city? But "he that is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he that ruleth his own spirit than he that taketh a city." Is it a thing of renown to take a kingdom? But "the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." "Who is he that overcometh the world? He that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God." Yet this is only one of his adversaries: "for he wrestles, not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." A victor has sometimes barely vanquished; another conflict would have ruined him. But the Christian having done all stands, and could defeat as many more—Yea, in all these things he is more than a conqueror.

They have often also distinguished themselves as donors and benefactors. Witness the Israelitish women at the erection of the tabernacle. "Moses made the laver of brass, and the foot of it of brass, of

the looking-glasses of the women which assembled at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation." When we consider the value of a looking-glass to a female; that it is the first and last object she regards as she enters and leaves an apartment; how desirable is it that she should strike, and how necessary it is to be able to adjust every article of attire; what self-denial was here! For we are to judge of things not by their intrinsic worth, but the estimation in which they are holden—It was saying, we care not how we appear if the service of God be provided for. What immense treasures did David lay up in his lifetime and leave at his death for the building of the temple, as you may see in the last chapter of the first book of the Chronicles! And read what Paul speaks of the poor Macedonians: "In a great trial of affliction, the abundance of their joy, and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power, they were willing of themselves; praying us with much intreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints." But see the people at the treasury. Many gave, and the rich cast in much: but a poor widow cast in two mites; and this was the exploit of the day. For they gave of their abundance; but she gave all she had, even all her living. There may be wonders and prodigies of kindness and liberality where very little is given if there be a willing mind. The Lord looketh to the heart.

These exploits therefore are not confined to any particular rank. No condition, however humble, is excluded from moral and religious distinction. The

poor as well as the rich, servants as well as masters, can be *truly* great. They can be "great in the sight of the Lord," and can obtain "the honour that cometh from God only."

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## SEPTEMBER 3.—MORNING.

"Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth." 1 SAM. iii. 9.

THIS shews a temper of mind which we should feel on every occasion. But what does He say to us now we are leaving home for a season; and shall in a peculiar sense be for a while strangers and pilgrims on earth?

He requires us in this excursion to look to our motives. Surely sin is out of the question. What a dreadful thing would it be to go from home to get opportunities to commit iniquity, without danger of observation and discovery! To such it might well be said, This journey shall not be for thine honour. But the object is lawful if it be business; if it be friendship; if it be relative affection; if it be health; if it be recreation within proper bounds, and with a view to prepare for future application.

He requires us to move in a dependence on his providence. The way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps. In his hand our breath is; and his are all our ways. There are many who live without God in the world. James describes the presumption of such an individual in the thought of a journey, and a project—"Go to now, ye that say, To-day or to-morrow we will go

into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy, and sell, and get gain: whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that. But now ye rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil." Paul speaks of a prosperous journey, by the will of God. Nothing can be done without his permission and blessing. He can set every thing against us; or make every thing conduce to our profit. He can spread a gloom over the fairest scenes of nature; or he can comfort us on every side. The elements are his. He preserveth man and beast. Let us remember our entire reliance upon him: and hear him at this moment saying, "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass."

He requires that, wherever we go, we should maintain the consistency of our character. This does not forbid the exercise of prudence. We are even commanded to be wise as serpents, as well as harmless as doves; and to walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise; and especially to walk in wisdom towards them that are without. But this does not require the surrender of principle, nor even the concealment of it. We are not to be ashamed of the Saviour, and of his words; but confess him before men. If we become all things to all men, it must be in things sinless and indifferent. If we please our neighbour, it must be for his good to edification. If we yield, and "trim our way," and act unbecoming our profession, we shall not only lose the benefit of reproving, convinc-

SEPTEMBER 3.—MORNING.

ing, and impressing others, by a practical testimony, but procure for ourselves contempt, instead of esteem. For those who understand not our experience, can comprehend our duty; and those who do not admire piety, despise inconsistency.

He therefore requires us to seize and to seek opportunities of usefulness. All cannot act in the same way. Our stations and abilities differ; and we are not to suffer our good to be evil spoken of. But let us beware of indecision and excuse. “He that observeth the wind shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds, shall not reap.” Who may not be a blessing in every place in which he is found? Who can tell the influence, immediate or remote, of a proper and lovely example? of a word fitly spoken? of a book lent, or a tract given? of a wise and moral distribution of alms?—“In the morning, sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good.” Let us never think any of our possessions or endowments our own. They are talents; and, “as every man hath received the gift, even so let us minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.” Many of our opportunities are already gone; and they are gone for ever. How many remain we know not; but they are few and uncertain. Let us awake, and resemble him who went about doing good; and who said, “I must work the works of him that sent me while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work.”

He requires that we should not be careless and inattentive observers of his works. The works of the Lord are great in number and in quality; and are

sought out of all them that have pleasure therein. And remember, says Elihu, that thou magnify his works, which men behold. We can see them everywhere; but, as we move from one place to another, we perceive them in greater variety. And when, from an inland situation, we reach the watery world, we behold his wonders in the deep. The sea is his; and he made it; and with all its immensity, holds it in the hollow of his hand. What wisdom do we recognise in the salineness of the fluid; and in the ebbing and flowing of the tide! What power appears in raising, and in calming the billows; and in giving to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandments; saying, Hitherto shall thou come, and no further; and here shall thy proud waves be stayed! And we should observe his work not only as objects of curiosity and wonder, but as excitements to admiration and praise. We should regard them, not as naturalists and philosophers, but with the views and feelings of Christians.

He requires that we should find in all we see confirmations of our faith in his word. The Scripture tells us of the Flood by which the ungodly world was destroyed, and the earth convulsed and torn—And what indications of this awful catastrophe do we often meet with! The Scripture tells us, that though God made man upright, he sought out many inventions; and that we are gone astray: there is none righteous no not one—And where can we go, and not discern this? “While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter and day and night shall not cease.” And in the succession of the seasons we see this pledge redeemed. He is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all.

his works—and we have but to open our eyes, and we see him opening his hand, and satisfying the desires of every living thing.

He requires that, in our progress and our return, we should be thankful. And how much is there to awaken our gratitude! That we have not only been supplied and supported, but have had so many agreeable prospects and entertainments, and changes—that we have been preserved in our going out, and our coming in—that we have been secured from wicked and unreasonable men—that no accident has spilt our life upon the ground, or bruised a limb of our body—that our property has been secured, as well as our persons and health—that no plague has come nigh our dwelling—and that we know also that our tabernacle is in peace! Bless the Lord, O our souls; and all that is within us, bless his holy Name!

He requires that we should realize life itself as only a journey, and think of getting home. We are but strangers and sojourners here, as were all our fathers. There is none abiding. “Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am.” “So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.”

## SEPTEMBER 9.—EVENING.

“Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity?”

MICAH vii. 18.

To whom will ye liken me; or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One. God is a being incomparable in his essence, his perfections, his works, and his ways.

Hence the sacred writers are constantly expressing their admiration of him. Sometimes they extol the displays of his wisdom; sometimes those of his power; sometimes those of his holiness. But they never utter themselves more forcibly and feelingly than in the praise of his goodness. Hence David exclaims: "O how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men!" And if this be exemplified in the blessings of nature and providence, how much more in "the exceeding riches of his grace!" "Herein is love." "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity?"

—Pardon regards guilt. Guilt is obnoxiousness to the penalty of the law we have transgressed: for the soul that sinneth it shall die. Pardon frees us from the sentence of condemnation, absolves us from all liableness to suffer, and gives us the security arising from innocence. Now, in the exercise of this God is supreme and unrivalled. None pardons like him.

None so peculiarly. He displays at once his justice and his mercy; his justice with regard to our surety, his mercy with regard to us. He laid on him the iniquity of us all; and was pleased to bruise him, and put him to grief, and make his soul an offering for sin. Thus he magnifies his law, preserves the honour of his government, declares his righteousness and shews himself just in justifying the ungodly; and the offender is not allowed to escape without being reminded that he had forfeited his life, and owes every thing he has to mere favour. For with regard to himself this pardon is an act of mercy. The law

was holy, and just, and good, and entirely worthy of God; and this was true of the penalty as well as of the precept. He could righteously have inflicted the penalty upon the person of the transgressor; and his willingness to release him, and admit a substitute, was an exercise of pure grace, to which he was not obliged. Besides, if he required an atonement, he provided the propitiation; and it was his own Son, whom he spared not. How wonderful is this! A king cannot thus at once equally display his justice and his mercy. If he punishes the rebel, he shews his justice; if he spares him, he shews his mercy: but he cannot equally evince both in the same instance—This is the prerogative of God only—But

“Here the whole Deity is known;  
Nor dares a creature guess  
Which of the glories brighter shone,  
The justice or the grace.”

None pardons like him—None so readily. Men, if not implacable, are yet commonly backward to forgive. They often assume airs of haughtiness; require the offender to feel the effects of his misconduct; exact from him the most trying humiliations; and always think it enough to comply after they have been frequently and earnestly implored. Every thing shews that it is their strange work, and not natural to them. But the Lord not only waits to be gracious, and is exalted to have mercy, but is ready to forgive. It is true that he requires confession and submission—and must require them; but it is equally true that he himself encourages and excites them. The first advance

is always from him; and he not only makes the overture, but beseeches us to be reconciled.

None pardons like him—None so perfectly. He forgives our trespasses, however numerous, and however aggravated. "Come," says he, "and let us reason together: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." In confirmation of this assurance, he has added examples, and shews us in his word characters the most criminal and hopeless obtaining mercy. He also tells us, that in this dispensation he is not to be judged of by a human standard—men's usages and conceptions, with regard to forgiveness, being infinitely below his own: "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." So he pardons fully and for ever. As far as the East is from the West, so far he removes our transgressions from us. He throws them behind his back. He casts them into the depths of the sea. If sought for they shall not be found. He not only forgives them, but forgets them; he remembers them no more for ever. He retains no anger, no indisposition towards us. He delights in us as if we had never sinned. He restores us to the most intimate friendship. He allows us not only to dwell in his house, but to lean upon his arm, and repose on his bosom.

There are some who not only believe all this, but

knew the truth of it from their own experience. They were once children of wrath, even as others; but they were made to see and feel their desert, and to cry, with the publican, God be merciful to me a sinner. And they were heard and accepted in the Beloved. They are now passed from death unto life, and their grateful hearts are saying, "O Lord, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me. Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the Lord JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation."

Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven! But how dreadful is the condition of those who are strangers to this remission! You lie open every moment to all the afflictions of life, the sting of death, and the damnation of hell. How is it you can enjoy any thing like pleasure by day, or sleep at night, while you know that, lying down and rising up, the wrath of God abideth on you?

But if willing to return, you need not despair. There is forgiveness with him. O hear his voice! Come and seek a share of his blessedness for yourselves. He will in no wise cast you out.

But the time wherein he may be found is short and uncertain. Therefore seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near. "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation."

## SEPTEMBER 4.—MORNING.

"Peace I leave with you." JOHN xiv. 27.

We know whose words these are—And who was ever so qualified and authorized to speak of peace as he? He is called the Prince of peace. His ministers are the messengers of peace. His word is the Gospel of peace. His way is the path of peace. An angel announced peace at his birth; and he himself bequeathed peace at his death—"Peace I leave with you."

For we may consider the words, so to speak, as a part of his last will and testament. Lands, and houses, and goods, and silver, and gold, he had none to leave. But such as he had he disposed of in the form and manner following. That is to say: his soul to God—Father, into thy hand I commit my spirit. His body, to the envy and malice of his enemies—to be buffeted, and scourged, and crucified. His wearing-apparel, to the soldiers—who divided his garments among them, and for his vesture cast lots. His widowed mother, to the care of John—who, from that hour, took her unto his own home. But what had his disciples all this time? Has he forgotten them? No—"Peace I leave with you."

But why does he bestow it upon them in a way of legacy? First; to make it the dearer. They would thus prize this boon—It was the remembrance of their dying Lord and Saviour. Anything left us by a dying friend, if it be only a book, or a ring, is esteemed and valued. Secondly; to render it the surer. If it be but a man's testament, yet if it be con-

firmed, no man can disannul it. But here every-thing concurs to establish confidence. The will is written, witnessed, and sealed. And the testator dies: for a testament is of no force while the testator liveth. And the executor is true and honest, and will see all punctually fulfilled—this is the Holy Ghost, which is to glorify him, by taking of his, and shewing it unto them.

This bestowment was much more than they de-served. They had always been dull scholars; and sadly repaid the labours he had expended upon them. They had been very defective servants; and only a few hours before, had been disputing among them-selves which of them should be the greatest. And now, as his suffering drew near, instead of shewing themselves his sympathising friends, they were all going to forsake him, and flee—yet, loving his own who were in the world, he loved them unto the end.

“Happy disciples, to be thus remembered, ho-noured, and enriched!”<sup>3</sup> you are ready to exclaim—“How we envy you!” But these words were not to be confined to them. They were personally to en-joy the privilege; and they were immediately ad-dressed. But, in receiving this assurance, they stood as the representatives of all his people, to the end of time. And you, even you, if you love and follow him, are as much included in the bequeathment, as if you were mentioned by name. Witness his follow-ing intercession—“Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word, that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in

us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one."

## SEPTEMBER 4—EVENING.

"And David was greatly distressed." 1 SAM. xxx. 6.

IN a fit of despondency and imprudence, having resolved to escape into the land of the Philistines, David went to Achish, king of Gath. After dwelling some time in the royal city, he requested the king to give him some place in the country for his residence; and Achish gave him Ziklag. After dwelling there a full year and four months, war broke out between the Philistines and the Israelites, and he was called upon by Achish to accompany him to battle, and was made the commander of his body guard. Here he was thrown into the utmost perplexity. He found himself under obligation to Achish; yet could not serve him without violating his conscience. If he fought against Israel, where were his patriotism and piety? And if he turned against the Philistines, where were his fidelity to his master, and his gratitude to his benefactor? God, who is always better to us than our fears, and has all hearts under his control, extricated him from this dilemma, through the jealousy of the lords of the Philistines, who insisted on his being sent back. But while exulting in his escape from one difficulty, another befalls him; and we need not wonder at his being "greatly distressed" when we glance at the ingredients and circumstances of his present affliction.

For when he arrived at Ziklag, the "Amalekites

had smitten it and burned it with fire." It is never safe to boast of to-morrow. We know not what a day may bring forth. Little can we imagine, when at any time we leave our home, what may occur before we return. It is a mercy if no evil befalls us, and no plague comes nigh our dwelling, and we find our tabernacle in peace. But Naomi, when her neighbours were congratulating her upon her return, exclaimed, "Call me not Naomi, call me Marah; for the Lord hath dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, and the Lord hath brought me home again empty." And David, when he returned to his residence, found his house and all his property consumed to ashes! Nor was this all—

They had taken away the women and the children captives. Persons may be tried not only in their circumstances, but in their connexions; and relative distress is frequently keener than even personal. Some of us have been bereaved, but it was in the course of nature. The objects of our attachment died in peace. We watched their bed of languishing with tenderness; we closed their eyes; we laid them in the grave; and have often repaired to the spot that contains their endeared dust. But David's family was carried off by an infamous and cruel banditti, to be sold or used as slaves. Yea, he knew not at the time but they had been degraded, violated, tortured, or even put to death.

The complicated calamity was also perfectly unthought of—"For man also knoweth not his time: as the fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as the birds that are caught in the snare; so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falleth suddenly

upon them." After a march of three days, cheered by every step that brought him nearer home, and rejoicing in the eager hope of finding rest in his dwelling, and delight in the embraces and hailings of his household, all this mass of misery meets him like a spectre instantly rising up in the road. He knew, he suspected nothing of the whole, till his eyes told him by the ruins, and his ears by the tale of the roofless sufferers, of the captivity of his family. We are prepared for what comes on gradually, and to be forewarned is to be forearmed. But what befalls us unawares often upsets the mind, and we have hardly the power of reflection, through which alone religion can operate. When the sky is lowering, and the waves begin to curl, and rise, and roll, the mariner takes in the sail: but here the storm bursts without a signal.

In addition to all this, he had to bear the reproaches and menaces of his attendants and townsmen: "for the people spake of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man in his sons and in his daughters." We can excuse their grief, but what can we say of the brutality of their purpose? How unenviable are the situations of public and official characters! If ever they sleep, it is seldom on beds of roses; or if they do, the roses retain their thorns, and the fragrance ill pays for the piercings. Is good accomplished or a glory gained? They divide it with others, or share it with chance. Does disaster or calamity occur? All is imputed to them, even to the result of pure accident. They are made answerable, not only for wisdom and diligence, but for success, for events, yea, for the seasons and elements themselves. How often did the Jews talk

of stoning Moses! If they wanted bread or water, or met with any difficulty; he was the cause or the occasion of it. Vulgar and ignorant minds must always have some object at hand against which to vent their feelings.

Finally, we see the deep impression the catastrophe made upon the mind of David—"Then David and the people that were with him lifted up their voice and wept, until they had no power to weep." He wept thus though a brave man: true courage is always tender. And he wept thus though a good man: grace does not deprive a man of sensibility: resignation and patience cannot be exercised without much feeling. The degree of grief is not always to be judged of by cries and tears. In general, noisy sorrow is superficial, as the deeper stream is the more silent. But it was otherwise here—"David was greatly distressed"—

Yet he was a man after God's own heart. If it were a rare thing for the godly to suffer, we might draw from our sufferings suspicions concerning our relation to God. But what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? Since through much tribulation the heirs of glory must enter the kingdom, these trials should rather be viewed as way-marks. They are really the effects and tokens of love. We shall see this hereafter; we should believe it now: and till we walk by sight, we should be concerned to walk by faith—

"They all are most needful; not one is in vain."

They are to try our trust, to exercise and strengthen our principles, and to bring us to the throne of the

heavenly grace. And well will it be if we are led to follow the example of David, as it will appear in the next article—But “David encouraged himself in the Lord his God.”

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## SEPTEMBER 5.—MORNING.

“But David encouraged himself in the Lord his God.”

1 SAMUEL, xxx. 6.

IT was a dreadful day for David and his fellow-sufferers, as we have seen in the foregoing exercise. But if the rest had no God in this time of evil, *he* had one; David encouraged himself in the Lord *his* God. He seldom addressed him in the Psalms without saying, “My God.” The same privilege have all his people. They have a God who claims them, and a God whom they claim—“God, even our own God shall bless us.” “This God is our God for ever and ever; he will be our guide, even unto death.”

“All people will walk every one in the name of his God.” All have some rock; but “their rock is not as our Rock, our enemies themselves being judges.” They who love and serve the creature more than the Creator are really worshippers of idols; and what wonder if the God they have forsaken for very vanity should say to them in their distress, “Where are thy gods that thou hast made thee? Let them arise, if they can save thee in the time of thy trouble.” Hence they faint in the day of adversity. All their resources are found worse than nothing A Christian would rather perish than

think of such comforters and deliverers—"God," says he, "is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever."—"It is good for me to draw near to God." So it was with David—"David encouraged himself in the Lord his God."

But in what pertaining to the Lord his God did he encourage himself? and in which all his followers may encourage themselves also? He encouraged himself in his relations. One of these he has mentioned, describing the confidence he derived from it: "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his Name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." He encouraged himself in his perfections. How relieving is the thought of a Being whose mercy endureth for ever; whose understanding is infinite; whose power is almighty, whose presence is everywhere! He encouraged himself in his engagements. They are great and numberless. They are adapted to all that we can feel or fear. They insure grace and glory; and withhold no good thing from us. And they are all yea and amen, in Christ Jesus. And therefore David, for their certainty, calls them a covenant, which used to be confirmed by oath and sacrifice; and says, "Although my house be not so with God, yet hath he made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure; for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow." He

encouraged himself in the belief of his providence. He knew that a sparrow falleth not to the ground without our heavenly Father, and that the hairs of our head are all numbered. All my times, said he, are in thy hand. I will cry unto God most high; unto God that performeth all things for me. He encouraged himself in the review of his former dealings. First, his dealings with others. "Our fathers trusted in thee, and thou didst deliver them." Secondly, his dealings with himself. "O my God my soul is cast down within me: therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar. Because thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice."

Ah! Christian, know your resource. Hear your God saying, Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee: and thou shalt glorify me. Make use of him as your "hiding-place," your "resting-place," your "dwelling-place." Beware in your distress of crooked policy, of unlawful means of relief, of impatience, of dejection. By nothing can you so much please God as by your confidence in him; and by nothing can you so recommend your religion as by shewing the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keeping your heart and mind through Jesus Christ. Check therefore every tendency, not only to murmuring, but to despondency; and after the example of your model this evening say, "What time I am afraid I will trust in thee." "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God."

SEPTEMBER 5.—EVENING.

"I will strengthen them in the Lord." ZECH. x. 12.

THIS is the very assurance our hearts want, as we think of ourselves, and survey the duties and trials of the Christian life. And we cannot too confidently rely on the accomplishment of it; for it comes from the lips of Faithfulness and Truth. But we may err, as to the manner in which it is to be fulfilled; and therefore our expectation is to be regulated and qualified accordingly.

Let me observe, then, that the fulfilment of the promise, as long as we are here, will not exempt us from all ground of complaint. It will help us in our work; but not cause us to cease from our labour. It secures us assistance in our conflict: but the war lasts for life. However strong our faith, and firm our hope, and longsuffering unto all joyfulness our patience, we shall still be sensible, and the more sensible too, of resistance, deficiency, defilement; and still acknowledge that, when we would do good, evil is present with us, and groan, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

This impartation of strength will also be seasonable, and proportioned to the exigencies of our condition—"As thy days, so shall thy strength be." What we are to look for is, not grace for imaginary purposes; but for real; not grace for future difficulties, but present; or, as the Apostle has it, grace to "help in time of need." It does not, therefore, follow, that what is formidable in the prospect,

may be so in the event. You may fear death while living, and rejoice in it at last. "Is this," said Dr. Goodwin, "Is *this* dying? Is this the enemy that dismayed me so long—now appearing so harmless—and even pleasant?"

These supplies of strength are to be sought after and expected in God's own way; that is, in the use of the means which he has ordained. So his word deals with our hope. "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you." "Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, and waiting at the posts of my doors." He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles: they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint."

And have I not found it so? In the day when I cried, has he not answered me, and strengthened me with strength in my soul? Have I not kneeled down with a contracted, and risen up with an enlarged heart? When I have read his word, hath he not thereby quickened me? Have I not found him in his palaces, for a refuge? Has he not sent me help from the sanctuary, and strengthened me out of Zion?

How foolish, then, to avoid religious exercises, when I am not in a proper, and spiritual, and lively frame! The *means of grace* are surely *then* the most necessary: as fire is the most needful when we are cold; and excitement when we are most dull.

It is only a part of the truth, that we are to pray with the Spirit—we are also to pray *for* it. Witness the language of the Saviour—"If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him!" Witness the example of the Church—"Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out."

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## SEPTEMBER 6.—MORNING.

"He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye." DEUT. xxxii. 10.

AND will not this apply, O Christian, to thee, as well as to Israel?

Will not the *finding*? "He found them in a desert land, in a waste howling wilderness." And where did he find you? What was your natural state? What was the world lying in wickedness? What was the earth, as filled, from the effects of sin, with vanity and vexation of spirit? There—not you found Him, but He found you—To His Name give glory, for the mercy and the truth's sake. You did indeed find him: but how? "I am found of them that sought me not; I am sought of them that asked not for me." You did choose him; but as the cause or consequence of his choice? "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that you should go and bring forth fruit, and that your

fruit should remain." Who can refuse to acknowledge—We love him, because he first loved us?

Will not the *leading*? "He led them about." There was no road, and much depended upon their movements. He therefore became their conductor. And we know how he did this. It was by a fiery cloudy pillar. As this advanced, they removed. As this turned to the right or the left, they turned also. As this paused, they remained. Thus they were freed from all anxiety. The distance they had to go was not great in itself. Jacob's sons, with their asses, soon passed and repassed between Egypt and Canaan. And the Israelites quickly reached Kadesh-barnea, which was not far from Jordan; but they were turned back. And if you consult a map, and observe their winding marches, you will see the propriety of the expression. He led them about. And has he not thus led you? You knew that the way of man is not in himself. You cried unto the Lord, and said, Lead me in thy truth, and guide me; for thou art the God of my salvation, on thee do I wait all the day. And he said, I will lead thee and guide thee, and instruct thee with mine eye. And has he ever abandoned you? What mistakes has he prevented! How often has he hedged up your path, to keep you from going astray! From how many embarrassments, the effect of your acting without him, has he extricated you! He has always led you in the right way: but it has often been a trying one; and such as you could not have foreseen or conjectured. In your temporal affairs he has perhaps checked you, and turned you back: you have had life to begin again; and to seek other openings and labours. And as to your spiritual experience, instead of gaining more of

the assurance of hope, doubts and fears have invaded you ; and instead of victory over your enemies, you have been led to see and feel more of the evil of your hearts : while you have often asked, If I am his, why am I thus ? Yet all this has fulfilled the promise, "I will bring the blind by a way that they know not ; I will lead them in paths that they have not known :

I will make darkness light before them ; and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them.

Will not the "*teaching*" ? "He instructed them." They had the finest opportunities in the world to learn, cut off as they were from intercourse with the surrounding nations, and being alone, with God as their preceptor. When at Horeb, they sat down at his feet, and received of his words. He gave them laws and ordinances. He sent them Moses, and Aaron, and Miriam. He taught them much by events, pleasing and painful. He shewed them in example the evil of sin, the happiness of obedience. Yea, he gave them his good spirit, says Nehemiah, to instruct them. And has he not instructed you ? If you have been unprofitable learners, the fault has been your own. You have had every thing favourable in your situation. A thousand resources of information have opened around you. You have the Scriptures ; the preaching of the word ; Christian intercourse ; and the unction from the Holy One, which teaches us all things. Every thing that has befallen you has read you lessons. Some things you *must* have learned—that this is not your rest—the folly of trusting in your own hearts—the greatness of your unworthiness—and that it is of the Lord's mercies you are not consumed.

—Will not the *protection*? “He kept them as the apple of his eye”—the tenderest part of the tenderest member. Did the serpents bite them? He provided a remedy, and healed them. Did enemies assail them? It was not with impunity. He reproved kings for their sakes, saying, Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm. Amalek; Sihon, king of the Amorites; and Og, king of Bashan, found, to their peril, that he made their cause his own. Did Balaam use divination and enchantment? He owned there was no enchantment against Jacob, nor divination against Israel. He cursed them; but the curse was turned into a blessing. In travelling, were they exposed to the sun? The Lord was their shade on their right hand. He preserved them in their going out and in their coming in—they were a people saved of the Lord. And who has kindly, tenderly, constantly kept you? Have you had no enemies? Why have you not been a prey to their teeth? Why has not your heart turned back? Why have not your steps declined from his ways? He has holden you up. You have been kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation.

This is what he has done for you.

—What have you done for him?

—What are you doing?

—What do you resolve to do?

## SEPTEMBER 6.—EVENING.

“The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.” JOHN i. 14.

THERE is something peculiar in this name—“*The Word*.” John is the only one that applies it to the Messiah. Yet it is not on this account the less

entitled to regard, for he has supplied many things omitted by the three former Evangelists. But the origin of the title has given rise to much inquiry. Some have supposed John derived it from Plato the philosopher, and some from Philo the Jew. Yet why should we suppose that he borrowed the term at all? Why not consider it as one of the words the Holy Ghost useth? and which it is possible the writer did not *fully* understand himself?

Yet what is the term designed to intimate? His office and designation. That as by his reason and speech a man displays his mind and will, so Jesus makes known the mind and will of God. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." Three things may be safely observed.

First, John uses it to express a *person*. Nothing would be more forced and false than to suppose "the Word" means an attribute only; that is, the wisdom of God. Of what use would it be to tell us that the wisdom of God was in the beginning with him? Could it ever have been separate from him? And how could this wisdom be made flesh, and dwell among us?

Secondly, That this person had a *being previously to his birth*. For in saying, the Word was *made* flesh, John intimates that he was something before this took place. Yea, he fully expresses this—"In the beginning was the Word"—In the beginning of what? The Gospel? No, but the world—The creation of all things. How useless and absurd to say that he was in the beginning of his own ministry!

Thirdly, That his pre-existence was a *Divine exist-*

ence. Observe, the name of God is given to him—and “the Word was God.” And the creation is ascribed to him: “All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men.” Could all this be affirmed of him, without the possession of Deity? Had he been but a man, an angel, a super-angelical creature, would John have expressed himself in a way so proper to lead men into error and idolatry—telling us not only that he was with God, but that he was God, and making him the fountain of all life and being? Is not this enough to entitle him to all adoration and praise?

But “the Word was *made flesh*.” Sometimes flesh signifies the corruption of human nature; as when it is said, “So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.” And “the flesh lusteth against the Spirit.” At other times it intends only the composition or constitution of humanity. Thus we read, “Except those days should be shortened, no flesh could be saved;” that is, no human being. And thus it is to be understood here: and as the Jews used the term flesh for man, there would be nothing strange or harsh in the phrase, “The Word was made flesh;” it was precisely the same as saying, The Word became man—Campbell therefore renders it, “The Word became incarnate.”

But did he cease to be what he was, in becoming what he was not? Here was union, but not transformation. He was God before he was in the flesh, and he was God after; but he assumed our nature into personal subsistence with his own. Because the children were partakers of flesh and blood, he like-

wise himself also took part of the same. He took not on him the nature of angels, but of the seed of Abraham. Hence in the Scripture many things are ascribed to him which will neither agree with his divinity or humanity separately. "Unto us a child is born:" this does not belong to him as Divine. And his name shall be called "the mighty God:" this does not belong to him as man. Man is a spiritual and a material being: spiritual as to his soul; material as to his body. Yet no confusion is produced by this conjunction: both retain their respective properties. It is not the body that thinks and reasons; and it is not the soul that eats and drinks. It is not the humanity of our Lord that is everywhere present; and it was not his divinity that was crucified. He died as man; he fills all things as God. We pretend not by these reflections fully to explain the subject: but they are sufficient to shew that there is no contradiction or absolute impossibility of conception in the case. But we allow, with the Apostle, that "God manifest in the flesh is a great mystery"—And what is not mysterious? Who can explain the most ordinary appearances and the most undeniable operations of nature? But this is also "a great mystery of godliness." It meets our condition. It brings down Deity to our reach. It renders him our example, our sympathizing friend, and the propitiation for our sins. And—

' While Jews on their own law rely,  
And Greeks of wisdom boast;  
I love the Incarnate Mystery,  
And there I fix my trust.'

"*And dwelt among us.*" This adds to his humilia-

tion—"Will God in very deed dwell with man upon the earth?" He might have been incarnate, and have dwelt in heaven, and among angels. But he dwelt among us. And not in the highest style of our being. Some of our race live in palaces; but he had not where to lay his head. They travel in ease and splendour; he travelled on foot, and was "weary with his journey." We only read of his riding once; and then it was on a colt, the foal of an ass. They are attended with officers of state; he was despised and rejected of men. They come to be ministered unto, but he to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

Dwelling expresses permanent residence. He had shewn himself of old, and had visited the children of men; but he soon again disappeared. But now he took up his abode with us for thirty-three years, well satisfied to keep out of heaven, and to remain here as long as there was any thing for him to do or suffer. This shews intercourse. He occasionally retired; but it was to prepare by privacy for publicity. He never refused society. He was present at the marriage of Cana, in Galilee. He accepted the invitation of Levi, when he made a great feast and bade many. He also received sinners, and did eat with them. There was nothing in him like extravagance, or sinful indulgence; but there was nothing monkish, abstemious, and austere, as we learn from the comparison and the reflection: "John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a devil. The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners." This was a slander; but as he

went about doing good, so he never by his example taught his followers to shun their fellow-creatures, and exclaim, "Stand by thyself, come not near to me; I am holier than thou." The truth is, we are to be in the world, but not of it. The religion of the Gospel calls us both out of the world and into the world—out of the world as to its maxims and temper—into it as a field of labour and a sphere of usefulness, where we are to be diligent in business, to relieve the distressed, to teach the ignorant, to reclaim the vicious. We are to fill our days; and live as long as we breathe. When Calvin was requested to leave off writing and correcting, What, said he, shall the Master come and find me doing nothing? And Philip Henry's remark is well known, who, when desired to spare himself, said, What are candles for but to burn out?

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## SEPTEMBER 7.—MORNING.

"The word of the Lord that came unto Hosea, the son of Becri, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam, the son of Joash, king of Israel."

HOSA i. 1.

WE are not informed whether he had been trained up for the holy office, or been called in a manner sudden and unlooked for. Some of the prophets were taken at once from following their common occupations: as we see in the instances of Elisha and Amos. Others were taken, and this was more generally the case, from the schools of the prophets; where, by retirement, and prayer, and meditation,

and instruction, they were gradually prepared to minister in holy things. Thus God both sanctified the use of means, and shewed that he was not confined to them. It is the same now. Some of the most pious, eminent, and useful ministers the churches ever possessed have been educated for the purpose; and we ought to be thankful for such institutions; and on these, for our spiritual supplies, we must *principally* depend—But we must not limit the Holy One of Israel. He will sometimes take a man out of our rules, and give him acceptance and success. And we must receive a Bunyan as well as an Owen. When will persons allow God to work in his own way? and learn that, because one thing is right, another need not be wrong?

But Hosea was *divinely commissioned*—“The word of the Lord came unto him.” For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” And they could *demand* attention, in the name of Him, who sent them—“Thus saith the Lord.”

—His *descent* is also remarked—He was “the son of Beeri.” The Jews have a rule, that the prophet whose father is named, was the son of a prophet. But this does not always hold. Nothing is recorded of Beeri. Yet it is reasonably concluded, that, unless he had been a man of some distinction, and from whom Hosea derived honour, he would not have been mentioned. And this he might have been, without possessing worldly rank and riches. The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour. He is happily and nobly descended who springs from those who are

great in the sight of the Lord—He may well exult, and say—

“ My boast is not that I deduce my birth  
From loins enthroned, and rulers of the earth;  
But higher far my proud pretensions rise—  
The son of parents pass'd into the skies ! ”

Let us so live, as that our children may derive from us advantage and respect.

But the principal thing is, the time of his ministrations—"In the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah; and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel." Now if he prophesied only from the end of Jeroboam's reign, the son of Joash, to the beginning of Hezekiah's, it would have been near seventy years. But he prophesied in the reign of both. And if we allow him a few years in each of these, and reckon up the length of the reigns between, his ministry must have been little short of eighty years; and it was probably even more. And five things may be observed from hence.

First. How very little we have of his prophecies! Fourteen short chapters, read in much less time than a modern sermon, include all that has been perpetuated of far the longest ministry on record. Some labour for posterity; and leave behind them works which will render them a blessing to future ages. Others are called more to serve their own generation, by the will of God; and are preachers rather than writers. How useful was Whitefield as a preacher! while his few writings have had little circulation, and serve rather to excite wonder that he was so powerful in another capacity. How useful

has Harvey been as a writer! while his preaching was without excitement, and scarcely distinguished by any effect. Some, like Doddridge, have excelled, both in the pulpit and from the press. Every servant of God has his peculiar gifts, and his appropriate sphere—"Even so, Father; for so it seemeth good in thy sight."

Secondly. He must have begun his ministry very young. Paul forbids the ordination of a novice, lest he should be lifted up with pride. Talent is not all that is necessary for the sacred office. How necessary is the knowledge that is derived from experience! and the confidence that grows out of the trial of character! Thirty was the age for entering on the Levitical service. And not earlier than this period did John and Jesus commence their public ministry. But "the word of God is not bound." Timothy was young; so young, that Paul was obliged to say, "Let no man despise thy youth." Samuel was employed while yet a child. Jeremiah was consecrated from the womb. And this was nearly the case with Hosea.

What a privilege, what an honour, to be early dedicated to the service of God! "I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth."

Thirdly. He must have been very old before he retired from labour. Some do not resign early enough, but stand about as a hinderance in the way of usefulness. The excellent Cornelius Winter often prayed to be preserved from this error. Indeed, few can sit well, and say of a successor, with proper feelings, "I must decrease, but he must increase." Others resign too soon. They would retire upon a pension before they are disabled in the holy war.

A minister may want the sprightliness and vigour of youth, and yet have the ripeness and richness of age; and the fruit may drop without much hard shaking. Some nobly fall at their post—sword in hand—faithful unto death—and, with the crown of life, obtain the commendation, “Thou hast laboured, and hast not fainted.”

Fourthly. He must have passed through a vast variety of condition. He lived in the reign of one good king, and of four bad ones. He saw peace, and much war. He saw plenty; and, more than once, scarceness and famine. He saw a few partial revivals of religion; but witnessed general and constant wickedness. How many of his relations, friends, and pious connexions, had fallen! How lonely must he have felt! How changed his views! How convinced must he have been, that all below is vanity and vexation of spirit!—while, yet, God was the strength of his heart, and his portion for ever. How much he knew of what was doing in other countries we cannot determine. But within the compass of his ministry lived Lycurgus, the famous Lacedæmonian legislator; and Hesiod, the Greek poet. Rome also was now begun.

Finally. A man of God may labour long, and do very little good. The people he addressed not only continued wicked, but waxed worse and worse; and the captivity he had threatened, he lived to see commenced. He certainly saw a part of Israel carried away captive, by Tiglath-Pileser; and probably the entire destruction of the kingdom of the ten tribes, by Salmanezer. This must have been very painful. But it did not slacken his efforts. We are not answerable for our success. If we lose our labour, we

shall not lose our reward. A greater than all said, "I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain: yet surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God."

## SEPTEMBER 7.—EVENING.

"I will fill this house with glory." HAGGAI ii. 7.

Two things are certain. First, that "this house" means the temple reared by the Jews after their return from Babylon. Secondly, the "glory" with which it was to be filled was to arise from the coming of the Messiah to dignify it—"Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heaven, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; and I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come—and I will fill this house with glory." This was to be more than a substitute for all the distinguished articles that were wanting in the second temple, compared with the first; and to account for the assurance, "the glory of this latter house shall be greater than that of the former."

Accordingly he appeared on earth while this house was standing, and was often found in it. The first time we read of his being there was as an infant, to be presented to the Lord. The offering that accompanied the dedication was "a pair of turtle-doves or two young pigeons." As this was the sacrifice allowed for the poor, in lieu of any thing more valuable, it shews the lowly condition into which he had entered. Few, therefore, for want of splendour, would notice the event. But this was not the case with all; and another kind of greatness was displayed. "There was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon;

and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel ; and the Holy Ghost was upon him. And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And he came by the Spirit into the temple : and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law, then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word : for mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people ; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel." "And there was one Anna, a prophetess, and she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.

At the age of twelve we find him in the temple, "sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them and asking them questions. And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers." How was his glory shed abroad when he "went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves, and said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer ; but ye have made it a den of thieves"! And "the blind and the lame came to him in the temple ; and he healed them. And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the Son of David ; they were sore displeased, and

said unto him, Hearest thou what these say? And Jesus said unto them, Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?"

Here was now found in the temple the body, of which the law was a shadow: the reality of all the types; the accomplishment of all the prophecies; the fulfilment of all the promises; the Consolation of Israel. Many eminent characters had entered the former temple; but he was fairer than the children of men; and higher than the kings of the earth. Think of his innocence. The former temple had seen good men, but never a sinless one. But he was harmless, holy, undefiled, separate from sinners: in him was no sin. Think of his devotion. What faith! What trust! What spirituality of mind! What fervour of love! What ardour of zeal! Such worship had never been rendered in Solomon's temple—no, nor by Adam in Paradise; nor by the angels in heaven. Think of his preaching there—"I have preached righteousness in the great congregation;" and in him were hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge; and he spake as never man spake. Oh to have heard him, when early in the temple he said, "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life"! Oh to have heard him at the passover, when, on the last, the great day of the feast, he stood and cried, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink"! Other teachers received a measure of the Spirit; but he was *full of grace and truth*. Think of his Divinity. He could say, "There is one in this place greater than the temple." In him dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. He was the

Lord of all—Well might *he* fill the house with glory.

The temple once thus honoured has long since been consumed. But there are temples sacred to his service now; and the Saviour's presence is the glory of them. And every believer loves the habitation of his house; and repairs to it, not for the stateliness of the edifice, the superbness of the decorations, or the effect of the ceremonies—if there was everything in it that was Jewish, Pagan, or Popish, it would all be nothing, less than nothing and vanity, unless he could see the beauty of the Lord; but because he has said, “Where two or three are gathered together in my Name, there am I in the midst of them.” And they find him faithful to his word. They hear his voice; see his goings in the sanctuary; taste that he is gracious; and are made joyful in his house of prayer: and though it may be a private room, or an upper chamber, when thus blessed and ennobled it is none other than the house of God and the gate of heaven.

Christians themselves are a building fitly framed together, and growing unto a holy temple in the Lord. Know ye not, says the Apostle, that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? And he is all in all as to his Church: “For I, saith the Lord, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her.”

There is yet another temple; and this too is filled with the same glory—“Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them,

nor any heat. For the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

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## SEPTEMBER 8.—MORNING.

"Despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and long-suffering?" ROM. ii. 4.

ONE of the ways in which God addresses us, in his word, is expostulation. To expostulate is to accuse before an open rupture. It is the lingering of friendship, offended indeed, but unwilling to abandon its object without further trial. It is anger blended with kindness; it is chiding, accompanied with entreaty.—This is a very pleasing view of the Supreme Being, and induces us to exclaim, Lord, what is man, that *thou* art mindful of him; or the son of man, that *thou* visitest him? By the transgression of his Law we reduced ourselves to ruin. He remembered us in our low estate; and provided for our deliverance. The blessing is placed before us, and within our reach. But we disregard it; and contemn the Saviour, as well as the Ruler. Thus we deserve that his wrath should come upon us. Yet, before he pronounces sentence, he sends for us into his presence; and reasons with us; that, being unable to defend our conduct, we may acknowledge, by our silence, that we have acted a part that leaves us without excuse, and without hope—"Despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and long-suffering."

The Apostle speaks of "the riches of his goodness." These riches appear in numberless displays.—But he adds—"and forbearance and longsuffering," to induce us to consider the latter as the proof of the former.

To see, then, the riches of his goodness, let us contemplate his forbearance and longsuffering. Every thing in God enhances his patience.

His *greatness* enhances it. We are more affected with an affront from an equal than from a superior; and more from an inferior than from an equal. How does the master resent an offence from his slave! or a king from a subject! All comparison fails between God and us. He is the maker of all things; and all nations before him are as nothing. This is the Being insulted. And who is the offender? A grovelling worm upon a dunghill. And yet he bears with us.

His *wisdom* enhances it. We cannot be affected with affronts of which we are ignorant. How would some be enraged if they knew only what is *said* of them by some of their "dear five hundred friends"—how they turn them into ridicule before they have well left their house; and what freedoms they take with their character, and their conduct, in almost every company! None of our offences are secret from God. He hears all; sees all; and knows perfectly every imagination of the thoughts of our heart. And yet he bears with us.

His *holiness* enhances it. If we do not think and feel a thing to be an affront, there is no virtue, for there is no difficulty, in enduring it. The trial is when it touches us to the quick in some most valued interest. Sin is exceedingly sinful. By nothing does God deem himself so dishonoured. He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. It is the abomi-

nable thing which his soul hates. And yet he bears with us.

His *power* enhances it. Why do we put up with a thousand wrongs? We know them, and feel them; but we reluctantly submit, because we have no way to punish them. Why are not sinners destroyed? Moses, when he had provoked the Egyptians, saved himself by flight. But whither can we go from God's presence, or flee from his Spirit? Some, when they have provoked resentment, have defied it, and successfully too. But who ever hardened himself against God, and prospered? His look is death. And yet he bears with us.

His *bounty* enhances it. We complain peculiarly of an injury or an insult, from one who is much indebted to us. From another, we say, we could have borne it: but he is viler than the brute; for the ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib. We are under infinite obligations to the God we provoke. In him we have lived, and moved, and had our being. His table has fed us; his wardrobe has clothed us; his sun has warmed us. And this is not all. His kindness continues, notwithstanding all our ingratitude. And he not only spares us, but in every way indulges us. He waits to be gracious, and is exalted to have mercy upon us.

Yet are these riches of his goodness "despised."—Despised by *inconsideration*. We treat them as unworthy of our notice. They do not occupy our thoughts, or our words.—Despised by *disobedience*. We resist their design; which is, to lead us to repentance. God calls; but we will not answer. He knocks; but we refuse to open—Who is the Lord,

that we should obey his voice?—Despised by *perversion*. We turn them into instruments of rebellion; and make them the very means of increasing our impenitency. If we thought God would destroy us the next sin we committed, it would not be committed: but since he is too kind to do this, we are induced to offend him. We are evil, because he is good.

How *unreasonable* is this contempt! How *vile!* how *shameful!* If an individual was to behave towards a fellow-creature as men are continually acting towards the blessed God, no one could notice him but with astonishment and contempt. Yet we talk of the dignity of human nature! or contend that it is but slightly injured by the Fall!

—And how *dangerous*, how *ruinous*, is this contempt! It is true God is merciful and gracious. But he will by no means spare the guilty. Nothing equals the penalty of the Gospel—it is the savour of *death unto death*.

## SEPTEMBER 8.—EVENING.

"For the Lord will have mercy on Jacob, and will yet choose Israel, and set them in their own land: and the strangers shall be joined with them, and they shall cleave to the house of Jacob." ISAIAH xiv. 1.

THE Jews were carried away captive to Babylon. But they were not to be destroyed there, or to remain there—"After seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place. For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end." With regard to this

restoration two things are mentioned in the words before us.

The one is the source of it—mercy, free and undeserved mercy: “I will have *mercy* on Jacob, and will yet choose Israel, and set them in their own land.” And this is the principle which always, as far as good is concerned, whether in possession or hope, leads him to deal with us.

The other is the consequence. Many, leaving their own country and their idols, would return along with them; others would unite with them after their return: “And the *strangers* shall be joined *with them*, and they shall *cleave* to the house of Jacob.”

And here we see a little of the design of God in their captivity. It was indeed to punish them for their sin: but his punishments are corrections; and he does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men. He would humble them, and prove them, and reclaim them; and not only do *them* good, but render them useful to *others*. And who can tell how many have had reason to bless God for the dispensation? For when they were conquered and enslaved they carried the elements of their religion along with them, diffusing their inspired writings, and spreading the knowledge of the true God. Many pious characters rose to distinguished eminence and influence during their stay in Babylon. Several very glorious and publicly witnessed miracles were performed on their behalf. Thus God pleaded the cause of his people, and shewed that, though he chastised them, they were the seed which the Lord had blessed. And their deliverance was so wonder-

ful, and attended with such unparalleled circumstances, that it not only at first seemed to themselves more like a pleasing dream than a reality, but induced the very heathen to say among themselves, "The Lord hath done great things for them." Hence many became proselytes, and professed the God of Israel.

Thus the Lord can change the darkest skies, and turn the shadow of death into the morning. By our suffering He can not only bless us, but make us a blessing. The little girl that waited on Naaman's wife had been torn from her parents, and carried away captive; but she was the means of honouring the God of Israel. The persecution which scattered the brethren from Jerusalem spread the Gospel in all the directions in which they fled. The blood of the martyrs was the seed of the churches. The dreary imprisonment of Bunyan for twelve years occasioned his writing the Pilgrim's Progress and the Holy War. The works of many other authors, whose praise is in all the churches, were the produce of their privations and hardships. Who can tell in how many ways we may be able to say, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted?"

But we here see that religious conviction produces attachment to the people of God. Man is by nature a social being. When sin falls in with his disposition, it is corrupted, and becomes a most powerful auxiliary of iniquity; but when grace meets with it, the bias is sanctified, and operates after a godly sort. The new creature feels the want of new associations; and here, as in every thing else, like attracts like. Hence Ruth, though a Moabitess, said to her Israelitish

mother-in-law; "Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God. Where thou diest will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me." And as soon as Saul of Tarsus came to Jerusalem, he "assayed to join himself to the disciples." So it is with all true converts: they easily abandon the sons and daughters of vanity and vice, to "take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, I will go with you, for I have heard that God is with you." They can now say, "I am a companion of all them that fear thee." In them "is all my delight." They will be joined with them, and cleave to them in their assemblies, as fellow-worshippers; in their communion, as church members; and in their practice and experience, as joint workmen in God's building, labourers in his husbandry, soldiers in his army, and followers in his ways.

Here is a good test by which you may judge yourselves. What would make you most happy in your retirement? Would it be this confidence of faith; "Thou hast given me the heritage of them that fear thy Name?" What is your principal desire when you consider your own condition and that of others? Is it this; "Look thou upon me, and be merciful unto me, as thou usest to do unto them that love thy Name?"

Happy they who can pray, "Deliver me from men of the world, who have their portion in this life." I ask not to be numbered with the rich, the mighty, and the noble. Tell me, O thou whom my

soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon. I long for their Shepherd, their pasture, their repose—

“O may I see thy tribes rejoice,  
And aid their triumphs with my voice;  
This is my glory, Lord, to be  
Join'd to thy saints, and near to thee.”

And if the *subjects* of Divine grace may be the *mediums* of it too, how much depends on our character and conduct! He that winneth souls is wise. Let us therefore walk in wisdom towards them that are without. Let us do every thing in our power to remove their prejudices. Let every thing in our religion be, not repulsive, but alluring; not only impressive, but amiable. Let us so hold forth the word of life as to be perpetually saying, “We are journeying unto the place of which the Lord said, I will give it you: come thou with us, and we will do thee good: for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel.” And if we are the means of bringing one individual from the world into the Church of the living God, we have done more than any conqueror who has delivered a whole nation from civil bondage. “There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.”

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## SEPTEMBER 9.—MORNING.

“They joy before Thee according to the joy in harvest.”  
ISA. ix. 3.

THREE circumstances are here mentioned. They *joy*. They *joy before Thee*. They *joy before Thee*

*according to the joy in harvest.* Each of these will supply an interesting and useful meditation.

#### THEY JOY.

Among the many mistakes entertained concerning religion no one is more common than the notion that it prescribes a forced, gloomy, melancholy course; engaged in which, we must bid adieu to every thing like pleasure. And nothing can be more injurious than this notion: for men will naturally turn from religion while they view it as the enemy of their happiness. But nothing is so unfounded and false as this opinion. Let us take it to three tribunals.

Let us bring it to the bar of *reason*. It must be allowed that God is able to make us happy or miserable. And if so—is it likely that he will suffer those who hate and oppose him to be happy? and those who love and try to please him to be miserable? What a notion of the Supreme Being would this imply! And what could equally blaspheme his character?—And has a hope, that my sins are pardoned; that God is my Father; that Providence is my guide; that Death is my friend; and that heaven is my portion, a tendency to inspire me with sadness, or with joy? And which is most adapted to make me wretched or comfortable within? Malice, or benevolence? Passion, or meekness? Pride, or humility? Envy, or complacency? Anxiety, or confidence?—Distant things do not sufficiently impress us. We need something immediate. Our propensity to present gratification is powerful. And must not religion meet this state of feeling, and provide for it? Thirsty as man is, if there be no pure stream at hand, will he not kneel down to the filthy puddle? What is to preserve us

from being drawn away by the allurements and dissipations of the world, but our having something better to satisfy our hearts at home, and to keep us from roving?—What can sustain us in our trials, and animate us in our duties, if destitute of present consolation? The joy of the Lord is our strength. We shall soon decline a course in which we feel no interest or delight. And if we are strangers to holy pleasure, how can we impress others in favour of religion? It is by singing at their work that his servants praise their master; and prove that his yoke is easy, and his burden light.

Let us take it to the bar of Scripture. Read the Bible all through for this purpose. Take its commands. What are these? “Rejoice in the Lord, and be glad, ye righteous; and shout aloud for joy, all ye that are upright in heart.” “Rejoice evermore.” “Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, rejoice.” Take its promises. What are these? “Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance. In thy Name shall they rejoice all the day; and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted.” “The ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs.” “They shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before them into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.” Take its representations. What are these? Go back to the beginning of the Gospel. The first churches walked not only in the fear of the Lord, but “in the comfort of the Holy Ghost.” Peter, addressing Christians at large, says, “in whom, believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.” If

we libel Christianity, and cause the way of truth to be evil spoken of, they honoured it. What hindered their joy? Losses did not—"They took joyfully the spoiling of their goods." Persecutions did not—"They received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost." Guilt did not—They joyed in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom they received the atonement. Death did not—They longed to depart, to be with Christ, which was far better. Eternity did not—They were looking for the blessed hope, and hastening unto the coming of the day of God. Joy was then considered an essential part of genuine religion. The circumcision not only worshipped God in the spirit, and had no confidence in the flesh; but also rejoiced in Christ Jesus. And the Apostle would as soon have excluded from it righteous conduct, and a peaceable temper, as spiritual joy: for says he, "the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

Let us bring it to the bar of *experience*. Experience signifies knowledge derived from experiment, in opposition to theory and hypothesis. And experimental philosophy has been, of late years, much extolled. And why should not experimental religion be equally recommended? Is there no standard in spiritual things, to which we can appeal? And is there no way of subjecting the truth and importance of their claims to trial? Many are, indeed, too careless, and too prejudiced, to pursue the process. But some have examined, and reduced the subjects to decision. And they, and they only, are the persons to whom you should repair in a case of this kind. They have this advantage over you. You have never tried

their principles; but they have tried yours. You have never walked in their ways; but they have walked in yours: and know, as well as you, that they are not pleasantness and peace. And, after trying your resources, and finding them to be vanity and vexation of spirit, they have tried the Saviour's blessings, and have found them to be full of grace and truth. At first they could only be swayed by faith; but now they have something more: they have the Witness in themselves. They know, for they have applied to him, that he is a suitable, a willing, a mighty Saviour. They know they were strangers to peace, till they were reconciled to God, by the death of his Son—but they have come to the blood of sprinkling. They know that once they were ignorantly asking, Who will shew us any good?—but they have found the fountain of life; and can say, It is good for me to draw nigh to God. *They*, therefore, ought to be heard. They can speak with confidence and earnestness; for they speak from experience—And this is their language: “Lo this, we have searched it, so it is; hear it, and know thou it for thy good.” “That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.”

Let us listen no longer to a report, as false as it is evil. It is a good land which the Lord our God giveth us. Let no man's heart fail him.

## SEPTEMBER 9.—EVENING.

"They joy before Thee according to the joy in harvest."

ISA. ix. 2.

THEY joy—BEFORE THEE. This shews

The *sincerity* of this joy. All men are in view of God; and they are always before him: but the wicked and the worldly never *joy* before *him*. *Their* joy is all show and profession: it may deceive their fellow-creatures; but it cannot impose on God. He sees through all the hypocrisy of *their* happiness: he knows, that, in the midst of their sufficiency, they are in straits; and that they sigh and groan, though others do not hear them, over all their successes and indulgences. Their joy is for company, not retirement. They cannot partake of it, till they forget God. One thought of him damps all their pleasure—Therefore they say unto God, Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. And hence, they dislike conscience, God's deputy and secretary. They cannot relish their enjoyments till they have sent him out of the way; or lulled him to sleep; or stupefied him with an opiate; or silenced him with a bribe; one look, one word from conscience, will be enough to spoil all their delights. They never taste one drop of real joy. There is no peace, saith God, to the wicked.

But the Christian's joy will bear the gaze of God. It lives and flourishes in his presence. And so far is he from shrinking back from the eye of his heavenly Father, that the thought of being near him, with him, before him, affords him relief and satisfaction. He can say with Asaph, "Nevertheless I am continually

with thee: thou hast holden me by my right hand. Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory. Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever."

This reminds us of the *secrecy* of this joy. It is before *him*; and often he alone discerns it. Strangers intermeddle not with it. The world knows it not. Seeing Christians often poor, and afflicted, and despised, they are at a loss to conceive how *they* can be joyful. Therefore believers are men wondered at. Their fellow-creatures can see their burdens; these are often plain enough: but they see not their supports; they see not how, underneath them, are the everlasting arms; or they would not wonder that they do not sink. They see their losses and trials; but their communion with God, and the comforts of the Holy Ghost, are invisible. Neither are the subjects of this joy disposed to divulge it to all. They are, indeed, ready to say to them that fear God, Come and I will tell *you* what he hath done for my soul: but were they to communicate their feelings to others, they often would not be understood by them. It would be worse than speaking of the pleasure of literature to a clown; or of the pleasure of melody and harmony to a man who has no ear for music. The joy also does not operate and discover itself like common mirth. It is not the froth that swims and shews on the surface. It lies deep. It is not noise, but composure. It is the calm of the mind: the content of the heart: the sunshine of the soul: a peace that passeth all understanding. A man, if joyful,

does not rejoice like a child. “True joy is a serious thing.”

But God sees his people, even when sorrowful, yet always rejoicing either in possession, hope, or desire. He sees them turning aside from the world, to refresh and exhilarate their spirits alone with himself: and hears them (when no other ear hears them) saying “How precious are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: when I awake, I am still with thee.”

“Be earth, with all her scenes withdrawn;  
Let noise and vanity be gone:  
In secret silence of the mind,  
My heaven, and there my God, I find.”

They joy before Him. This also reminds us of the *medium* of this joy; not indeed exclusively, but preeminently so—It is connected with the *worship and ordinances of God*. And the allusion is to the three annual solemnities of the Jews when they went to appear *before the Lord* in Zion. For there he was considered as residing. There was his house, his table, his attendants. This, said he, is my rest for ever: here will I dwell, for I have desired it. Hence says David, when shall I come, and appear before God?—These services were called feasts. There were songs to be sung in the way to them. The people went with the voice of joy and gladness to keep holy day. And when they arrived, they were required “to rejoice before him.” Is God less present in our assemblies, than in those of the Jews? Has he not said, “In all places where I record my Name I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee”? And many

can set their seal that God is true. They know he is there, waiting to be gracious, and exalted to have mercy. They have found him there, and conversed with him, as a man talketh with his friend. They have seen his power, and his glory in the sanctuary, and have there tasted that the Lord is gracious. Hence they hail the Sabbath, as the day of holy convocation, with delight. They are glad when the summons comes to go to the house of the Lord. They come before his presence with thanksgivings; and shew themselves glad in him with psalms.

Yes, they who mourn; and are there comforted—They who come burdened with guilt; and are there set free—They who come in the midst of trouble; and find him in his palaces for a refuge—They who come cold and languid, and are quickened according to his word: these verify the promise, “I will bring them to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer.” And they know the meaning of the declaration—“They joy BEFORE THEE.”

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## SEPTEMBER 10.—MORNING.

“They joy before Thee according to the joy in harvest.”

ISA. ix. 3.

THEY joy before Him—ACCORDING TO THE JOY IN HARVEST. And what is this joy?

It is a joy connected with *exertion*.—Reaping is no easy thing. But this is not all that is required. There is manuring, and ploughing, and sowing, and harrowing, and weeding. All these are previously necessary to the joy of harvest. The husbandman,

does not eat the bread of idleness. His labour fills his hands. Every season has demands upon him; and the end of one work is the beginning of another. Indeed, nothing valuable is to be obtained without diligence and difficulty: yea, it would not be valuable, or prized, if it were acquired priceless and painless. And are not we to exercise ourselves unto godliness? And is it nothing to worship God in spirit and in truth? And to watch in all things? And to pray without ceasing? And to keep the heart with all diligence? "But the grace of God does all this *for us*." It does. But it is equally true, that it does all this *by us* too. God does not believe and repent; but enables us to believe and repent. We run the race that is set before us, we fight the good fight of faith—though in him is all our help found.

This joy requires *patience*. The husbandman soweth in hope; but the accomplishment of his hope is future. Weeks and months, and many dreary weeks and months, intervene, before his wishes can be fulfilled. Yet he is not foolish enough to suppose, that he has laboured in vain, because he cannot reap as soon as he has sown; or childishly eager enough to cut down the grain green to hasten the harvest. But what does he? "The husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain." And so Abraham, after he had patiently endured, received the promise. Christians, also, are required to wait. And let them remember, that in due time they shall reap, if they faint not. And they have not long to wait. Their salvation is nearer than when they believed. Yet a few more

rising and descending suns; and it shall be said, "Put ye in the sickle; for the harvest is ripe."—In the mean time the process is hourly advancing to maturity; and the end shall prove that every thing is most beautiful and most profitable in its season. "It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord."

This joy is not free from *anxieties*. When the seed is first thrown into the ground, it seems lost; and when it revives from a kind of death, and springs up, it has to encounter the frosts of winter, the changings and blights of spring, the lengthened dryness or wetness of summer. And when the period is arrived for securing the precious treasure, solicitude is more alive and alert. The husbandman often rises and looks at the sky. Ten times in the day he examines the glass. He goes about with a heavy heart, and a depressed countenance; and often forebodes the worst: and it is not till he has safely housed the whole, that he can give up himself to satisfaction and delight. But how will this apply to Christians? Is there any thing precarious in the purpose and promise of God? No. But it is otherwise with their apprehensions. Their eternal prospects awaken all their concern; and they have a thousand doubts and fears concerning their safety and success. Am I an heir of Heaven? Is this repentance towards God? Is this faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ? Can these wandering thoughts and imperfect desires be prayer? What if, after all I should fail of the grace of God, and come short of the glory to be revealed!

But this joy is *great*. When the harvest is come, every face betrays pleasure. The very toil seems

delight. They that pass by say, "We bless you in the name of the Lord." "He that soweth, and he that reapeth, now rejoice together." Pennant tells us, in his Travels, that in parts of Scotland he sometimes saw large numbers reaping, to the sound of a musician behind them, playing on the bag-pipe; and thus enlivening the scene, and softening the work. And David says, "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy;" or, as it is in the margin, reap singing. And he adds, "He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." And who has not heard the shoutings of the rustics, as the last loaded wain returned from the field, covered with green boughs? And who has not witnessed the rude mirth of harvest-home? But if "the poor labourers sing," think of the owner! Now his anxieties are dispelled! Now his patience is rewarded! Now his exertion and expense are abundantly repaid—his garner is full, affording all manner of store; and he hails, in his possession, the means of indulgence, improvement, and wealth. Yet, what is this joy compared with the Christian's? The one is for the body; the other for the soul. One is for time; the other is for eternity. One is common to the wicked and the righteous; the other is peculiar to the subjects of divine grace. The one may gender intemperance, and sin; the other sanctifies, while it contents.

Let me learn, then, to improve the works of creation to pious purposes; and make nature a hand-maid to grace.

And let me be thankful for the harvest with which

we have so recently been favoured. He has again “prepared of his goodness for the poor.” All, indeed, are concerned. “The king is served by the labour of the field.” But kings have many ways of living that poor people have not. We do not think of palaces or mansions, so much as of the dwellings of the poor, when we view the waving fields. He has not only given us plenty, but afforded us the appointed weeks of harvest. “Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men! For he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness.”

Yet man liveth not by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. Let me therefore labour, not for the meat that perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life. All spiritual blessings in heavenly places are provided and presented. Yet the season for securing them is limited, short, and uncertain. Now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation. And how many, in consequence of neglect, have exclaimed, at a dying hour—THE HARVEST IS PAST; THE SUMMER IS ENDED—AND WE ARE NOT SAVED!

## SEPTEMBER 10.—EVENING

“To the law and to the testimony.” ISAIAH viii. 20.

THE “law” and the “testimony” are a fine representation of the Scripture. Both these names are often applied to it, especially in the book of Psalms. They are both significant and striking. It is called the law to remind us of its authority, equity, promulgation, and penalty. It is called the testimony,

because it contains the mind, the judgment, the deposition—the witness of God himself concerning all those subjects which it is of importance for us to be acquainted with, especially concerning the way of salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ. The whole Gospel is therefore called “the witness which God hath testified of his son.” And our Saviour, speaking of the writings of the Old Testament, says, “They are they that testify of me.”

To this word *we* are to appeal. We are to appeal to it *only*—“To the law and to the testimony,” and to nothing else. This in various instances is eluded. A Jew admits the Scriptures of the Old Testament to be of God; and could you lead him to these *only*, you might easily convert him to Christianity. But in his case they are surrounded with Talmudical and Rabbinical appendages; the errors, falsehoods, follies, and absurdities of which can scarcely be conceived. Their oral law renders Moses and the prophets almost inaccessible, or perverts their meaning; and little can be done unless you separate the vile from the precious, and lead them at once to *the* law and *the* testimony. A Papist admits the Scriptures of both the Old and New Testament to be divine; and could you contend with him upon this ground only, a victory would be easily obtained. But he admits along with these the Apocrypha, tradition, the decrees of councils; and the word of truth is approached, if not through these, yet in full company with them, and can only speak as they shall approve. And there are Protestants who invite you into the temple of Revelation; but you must enter leaning on Calvin, or Arminius, or some other interpreter, who is to tell

you how the responses of the sacred oracles are to be taken; for you cannot be trusted alone. Hence articles, and creeds, and systems, are drawn up by fallible men, who have no other sources of information than ourselves, and these are to be taken as including *all* the faith once delivered to the saints. But however large the vessel they construct, it will not contain all this ocean. Christianity is "all the fulness of God." If these formularies are designed and used as human and limited aids to help in arranging, remembering, or understanding the Divine record, they may not be only unexceptionable, but useful. But how apt are they to grow in their claims, so that in time they are virtually regarded by many as of paramount importance with the Scripture itself! But to the law and to the testimony. If they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them; and they are to have no dominion over your faith. Stop nowhere on this side the great Teacher sent from God. If Moses and Elias were to appear with him in glory, the voice would cry, "Hear ye *him*." If I called myself after any human leader, it should be an inspired one. I would call myself a Johnite after John, or a Paulite after Paul. But was Paul crucified for me? or was I baptized in the name of Paul? Let it be enough for me to be called a Christian after Christ. Every thing more is forbidden by himself: "Call no man master upon earth; for one is your master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren."

As we should appeal to it only, so we should appeal to it *wholly*—To the law and to the testimony, with every thing religious. We say religious, for

this is the subject in question. Other things may be carried to other tribunals. In matters of learning, science, and commerce, reason may fill the judgment-seat. But here, in all cases, the authority of Scripture must decide. Four things in particular we must always take to this standard.

First. Take your *state* to the law and to the testimony. Some never examine themselves. Others are satisfied to live year after year trembling between hope and fear. Others draw a conclusion in their favour; but it is a groundless one, and will terminate in the bitterest disappointment and anguish. It is a very serious thing to determine your condition before God. And yet how desirable is it! Even if you find yourselves condemned already, it is well to learn it while deliverance is yet possible; and if you are justified by the Saviour's blood, how much will the knowledge of it conduce to the glory of God and your own comfort! But by what can you safely determine your state? The word is to judge you in the last day. Judge yourselves by it now.

Secondly. Take your *principles* to the law and to the testimony. I need not inform you of what importance just sentiments in religion are: you are therefore commanded to buy the truth and sell it not. But great differences with regard to what truth is prevail among those who call themselves Christians; and they cannot all be right. There are diverse and strange doctrines: but it is a good thing for the heart to be established with grace; by which the Apostle means the doctrines of grace. And here all our satisfaction must be derived from the conformity of our creed with the written word. Bring therefore your views of sin, of the Fall, of the person and work

of the Lord Jesus, the foundation of our acceptance with God, and the order and the stability of the ever lasting covenant—bring them all, and weigh them in the balance of the sanctuary. Like the Bereans, search the Scripture daily to see whether these things are so. Prove all things, and hold fast that which is good.

Thirdly. Take your *experience* to the law and to the testimony. Some ridicule all the various feelings in religion. But Christianity *must* be an experimental thing; for it must enter the mind, and affect the conscience and the heart, before it can pervade the conversation and life. There is however much that is fanciful, and enthusiastical, and wild; and therefore it is necessary to bring all the influences and operations of this kind, and compare them with the work of the Spirit, and the effects of Divine truth in the soul, as described by the sacred writers.

Fourthly. Take your *practice* to the law and to the testimony. Your religion is nothing without this. See whether your conduct—with regard to God—with regard to your fellow-creatures—and with regard to yourselves, be such as this word describes and enjoins. If you thus fairly appeal to the Scripture, it will doubtless censure and condemn you in many things; but do not consider it your enemy because it tells you the truth. Faithful are the wounds of a friend. The discoveries you will make may be, and often will be, humbling; but the sacrifices of God are a broken heart. You will be gainers by a process, though painful, that checks self-righteousness, that induces you to rejoice in Christ Jesus, having no confidence in the flesh, and urges you to pray for more of that grace which is alone sufficient

for you. Indeed the very willingness to come to this standard is a token for good. "Every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest that they are wrought in God." Blessed is the man that can kneel and pray, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

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## SEPTEMBER 11.—MORNING.

"Sit thou at my right hand." PSALM cx. 1.

It will be remembered how our Saviour perplexed the Pharisees, by showing that these words were addressed by the Father to the Messiah, whom David calls his "Lord," though he was his "son." But let us notice the expression itself, and the more so because the expression occurs so frequently in the Scriptures.

It may be considered as importing repose and refreshment after all his exertion and toil. For he did labour; as he said, "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, wherein no man can work." At the close of life therefore he could acknowledge, "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." And though, from the state of his mind and heart, to do the will of him that sent him and to finish his work, was his meat and drink,

yet he was no stranger to weariness and suffering. But he hath entered into his rest, having ceased from his own works as God did from his. He bleeds, he “dieth no more.” “For the joy that was set before him he endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

Sitting at the right hand denotes pre-eminence. At the last day the saints are represented as at the right hand of the Judge. Joseph wished the right hand of his father to be imposed upon the head of Manasseh his first-born. At Solomon's right hand sat the queen, in gold of Ophir. The greatest honour a king can shew to any person is to seat him at his right hand. Hence all the glories of empire therefore were to descend from this station, as we see in the Psalm before us. From thence his enemies were to be made his footstool ; from thence he should send forth the rod of his strength out of Zion, and rule in the midst of his foes ; from thence, in the day of his power, he should obtain a willing people, numerous as the dew of the morning ; and from thence he should strike through kings in the day of his wrath, drink of the brook in the way, and lift up his head as more than a conqueror. Hence the Apostle considers it the extreme of dignity : “To which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool ?” And again ; “He set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come : and hath put all things under his feet.”

Much of this is at present unrealized. But we see

Jesus, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour. And the view should gratify our affection. Love delights in the glory of its object. If therefore we love him in sincerity, after sympathizing with him in the garden, and smiting on our breasts at the cross, what a satisfaction shall we feel to view him possessed of power over all flesh, all power in heaven and in earth, and exalted far above all heavens, that he might fill all things! John could not go on with his description of him without pausing to express the adoration of his heart; "To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

Let the view also encourage our hope. We are deeply interested in his elevation. It was expedient for us that he went away. In his ascension he received gifts for men. As glorified, he gives the Holy Ghost. As exalted, he is a Prince and a Saviour, to rule and relieve his people, and to make all things work together for their good. "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." He is our head and representative, and by reason of our union with him we are "quickened together with Christ, and raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ."

And let it wean us from the earth. Where the treasure is there will the heart be also. But he is your treasure, and he is in heaven. Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here. He is risen. Follow him; and "seek those things that are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God." What an inducement it was to Jacob, at a period when

nature dislikes a change, to leave his own country, and go down into Egypt, when he heard the message, "Thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me ruler throughout all the land of Egypt: come down unto me, tarry not: and thou shalt dwell in the land of Goshen, and thou shalt be near unto me—and there will I nourish thee"! At once his aversion and fears gave way. "And Israel said, It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive: I will go and see him before I die." And what says Jesus to his people? Come up hither. I am Lord of all the region into which ye shall enter—Come, and be near me—Come, and be for ever with the Lord.

And let it embolden us, while here, to acknowledge and honour him. Were we to be ashamed of him, or to deny him, we should be far guiltier than Peter. For we run no such risk in confessing him as he did—He trembled for his life. And when he disowned him, his Lord was a prisoner at the bar, and going to be crucified, under a charge of blasphemy and sedition—But we deny him on the throne; angels, principalities, and powers, being subject unto him, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but in the world to come. "Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession."

## SEPTEMBER 11.—EVENING.

"Fear thou not: for I am with thee." ISAIAS XII. 10.

How numerous the admonitions against fear addressed in the Scripture to the Lord's people! And what do all these imply, but their proneness to apprehension, and the groundlessness of their alarms?

Hence the injunction is never unaccompanied with an argument to enforce it. For, whatever the men of the world may think, religion is wisdom, and its children are able to give a reason of the hope that is in them. Hence knowledge always befriends a Christian. It is injurious to the comfort of many, because their comfort is founded in delusion. They think themselves safe while their house is built upon the sand; and therefore a discovery of the truth must tend to distress them. But though the Christian may fear, everything is safe and right with him; and therefore the more he truly examines his condition, the more he must be satisfied with it: his doubts are mistakes, his apprehensions are misapprehensions—He only needs to be informed of things as they really are, and he is free indeed. Hence nothing can be of more importance to the subjects of Divine grace than just and clear views of their state and privileges; for though their safety does not depend upon the degree of their knowledge, their consolation is much affected by it—They that *know* his Name will put their *trust* in him.

The presence of God is the most effectual resource against the fears of his people: “Fear thou not; for I am with thee.” This does not intend the essential presence of God by which he is everywhere. When his presence is spoken of in a way of promise, it refers not to a perfection of his nature (though this is always implied), but to his peculiar nearness and influence as their Saviour and their friend. He is in one place as he is not in another. He is in heaven as he is not on earth. He is with his Church as he is not with the world—“The Lord is nigh unto them

that are of a broken heart, and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit."

What the Lord says to all his people he says to each of them individually, "Fear thou not; for I am with thee." And what fear will not this assurance prevent or remove?

Do your temporal exigencies excite your fear? Fear thou not, for he is with thee to provide for thee. He sustained the Jews with manna from the clouds, fed Elijah by ravens, and multiplied the widow's oil and meal. You are not to look for miracles; but you may look for the Lord, who performed these wonders of old. He is with you: and his hand is not shortened, that he cannot save; nor his ear heavy, that he cannot hear—

"And sooner all nature shall change,  
Than one of his promises fail"—

And what has he promised? Thy bread shall be given thee, and thy water shall be sure. O fear the Lord, all ye his saints; for there is no want to them that fear him. The young lions do lack and suffer hunger, but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing. "Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?"

Do your perplexities excite your fears? Fear thou not, for he is with thee to guide thee. The Jews had before them a wayless desert; but, to relieve them from their anxieties, the Lord furnished them with a pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night. As this paused, they rested; as this moved, they followed

straight on, or turned to the right hand, or to the left; according to the direction of their leader, till it brought them to a city of habitation. You have the same advantage. You have the world before you, through which you must pass to reach a better, even a heavenly country. How much depends upon your course, yea, and upon every movement! And the way of man is not in himself, it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps. Neither is it necessary, if he knoweth the way that you take, and will direct you with his eye. And he is with you for this very purpose: "I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known; I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them."

Do your duties excite your fears? Fear thou not, for he is with thee to aid thee. You are indeed called to deny all ungodliness, and worldly lusts; to forgive injuries; to walk by faith; to have your conversation in heaven. You will not quarrel with these demands; you will acknowledge them to be just and good: but you will lament your want of conformity to them; and sometimes they may discourage you—They must indeed always dismay you if you view them only in connexion with your own strength. But your sufficiency is of God. His almighty Spirit shall help your infirmities. He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. His strength is made perfect in weakness.

Do your dangers excite your fears? Fear thou not, for he is with thee to keep thee. It cannot be denied

that you are surrounded with enemies, compared with which you are nothing in yourselves. But though a worm, Jacob shall thresh mountains. If God be for us, who can be against us?

Do trials excite your fears? Fear thou not, for he is with thee to comfort thee. "I, even I, am he that comforteth you." "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you, and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem." And his consolation is not only tender, but strong consolation, sufficient to bear up the mind under any burden, and to cheer the heart in every distress. "Yea," says one who had often been revived in the midst of trouble, "yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Death is a trying hour; but it should not appal you. You are not to judge by your present feelings what your experience will be when the season arrives. He is peculiarly with his people in their afflictions, and his grace is proportioned to the time of need—He will not, he cannot fail you in your last extremity. You will smile on death if God smiles upon you."

Well, here is enough in every period, in every condition, in every circumstance, to embolden and animate us—if we can but lay hold of it. But what is all this without faith? Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief!

## SEPTEMBER 12.—MORNING.

"Yea, he loved the people." DEUT. xxxiii. 3.

THERE can be no doubt of the truth of this assertion with regard to Israel. They were often reminded of it; and they were as often told *why* he set his love upon them. The reason was not their greatness; for they were the fewest of all people: nor their goodness; for they were a stiffnecked people: but because the Lord had a favour towards them. Hence he chose them, and redeemed them, and provided for them, and distinguished them by miracles and privileges. "To them pertained the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises." "He dealt not so with any land."

But has he less appeared to thee, O Christian! saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love, and with lovingkindness have I drawn thee? Here is the source of your salvation. However wide, and however far it flows, here the river rises; and take what stream of it you please, it will lead you up to this spring-head, the free and undeserved favour of God—"Yea, he loved the people."

But his love to his people, so to speak, is of three kinds.

A love of *benevolence*. This consists in wishing and designing them good.

A love of *beneficence*. This consists in doing them good. It appears in a thousand instances. The principal one of all is, his remembering them in their low estate, and sending his only begotten Son into

the world, that they might live through him. *Herein*, therefore, says the apostle John, is *love*; not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. It was necessary to find a way in which his goodness could reach us, consistently with his nature as a holy being, his claims as a lawgiver, and his honour as a governor. And this medium of our salvation does not therefore detract from the author of it: for if he required a sacrifice, he furnished one, and it was the *Lamb of God*. And therefore the Apostle says, being justified *freely* by his grace, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.

A love of *complacency*. The love of benevolence, and the love of beneficence, regarded them as unworthy and as miserable: but the love of complacency regards them as new creatures. He cannot take pleasure in them while they are destitute of his image, and enemies to him by wicked works. What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? But he prepares them for his delighting in them, and holding intercourse with them. He saves them by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost. Then he takes pleasure in them for they fear him, and hope in his mercy. Does a man take pleasure in his inheritance? In the wife of his bosom? In the children of his affection? In the work of his hands? They are all this, and more than all, to the God of all grace. He puts their tears into his bottle—Are they not in his book? Their prayer is his delight. Their alms are the odour of a sweet smell. He corresponds with them. Visits them.

Takes up his abode with them. He rejoices over them with joy. He rests in his love. He joys over them with singing.

What can I wish for more? Suppose men reproach? Since I have been precious in thy sight, I have been honourable; and thou hast loved me. Let them curse; but bless thou. One smile of thine is better than life; and will more than balance a universe of frowns.

Let my portion and the portion of mine be—"The good will of him that dwelt in the bush."

## SEPTEMBER 12.—EVENING.

"O thou Preserver of men!" Job vii. 20.

THE word may be rendered, and in some versions has been rendered, "O thou *Observer* of men!" And it is a true and an awful reflection, that "his eyes are upon the ways of men, and he seeth all their goings: there is no darkness nor shadow of death where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves." He is an unerring observer; an observer whose glance nothing can escape; an observer who records all he witnesses, and records it with a view to exposure and trial: for "God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil."—It has been contended, too, that the connexion in which the term is found requires this translation: "I have *sinned*, what shall I do unto thee, O thou observer of men!" But in this, as in *almost* every other instance, we deem the present rendering preferable, and preferable even on account of the connexion. Here is a penitential confession:

but in all repentance, at least in all repentance that is unto life, a view of the *goodness* of God is necessary, both to excite hope, and to produce godly sorrow; and it is here seen and acknowledged: for “it is of the Lord’s mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not; they are new every morning”—

We need not endeavour to prove that man needs preservation. As he did not make himself, so he has no sufficiency of his own to sustain himself. If left to himself for a moment, he would relapse into nothing. He lives, and moves, and has his being, in God. He is constantly surrounded with dangers: yet he is not sensible of even one in a thousand of them, and he is unable to ward off those he apprehends. And who among his fellow-creatures is interested enough, wise enough, powerful enough, always near enough, patient enough, to watch over and secure him? But God is infinitely qualified for the office, and he graciously condescends to assume the character of “THE PRESERVER OF MEN”—Let us bring this home to ourselves.

Why died we not from the womb? Why dropped we not when babes from the hands of a heedless or unfortunate nurse, and, like Mephibosheth, became cripples for life? Why fell we not a prey to the perils of infancy? childhood? and youth? How many victims of accident, of disease, and of mortality, have we known! But we are the living, to praise him as it is this day. And wherefore? Ebenezer! “Hitherto hath the Lord helped us.”

And if the Preserver demands gratitude for the past, he authorizes our confidence and comfort with

regard to the future. Let us think of him under this endearing relation, and in all the uncertainties before us be encouraged—encouraged when we lie down, and have to pass through the darkness and dangers of the night-season—encouraged when we rise in the morning, and have to go through the businesses and perils of the day—encouraged when we travel at the call of duty, or for the purpose of friendship or health: let us say, as we advance, “O Lord, thou preservest man and beast;” and as we return let us remember the promise, “Thou shalt know also that thy tabernacle is in peace, and thou shalt visit thy habitation and not sin”—Yea, in all the parts and passages of that life, in the midst of which we are in death, and know not what a day or an hour will bring forth, let us strengthen and cheer ourselves with the persuasion that nothing can befall us by chance, that all our times are in his hand, and that we are immortal till our work is done. A sparrow falleth not to the ground without our heavenly Father; and the very hairs of our head are all numbered.

But the subject has a peculiar bearing upon Christians. For while he is the Saviour of all men, he is especially so of them that believe. A man takes more care of his jewels than of his common property; and is more concerned for the safety of his wife and children than of his cattle. God's people are to him more than these images express. Accordingly we are assured that he takes pleasure in them that fear him, in them that hope in his mercy. He keeps them as the apple of his eye. Lest any hurt them, says he, I will keep them night and day. This is the promise made to every Israelite indeed;

"Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord is my keeper: the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand. The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night. The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall preserve thy soul."

And the soul is the main thing. Now this is absolutely secured. Other things are only secured conditionally. The Christian may suffer from the strife of tongues; he may lose his substance, his health, and even his life—but he can never lose his soul. With regard to his eternal all, he can say, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that, which I have committed to him against that day." Thus he is not afraid of evil tidings; for his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord. My enemies are numberless and formidable, and I am as weak as I am exposed: but "The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower. I will call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from mine enemies." Thus it is said, "They shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods." How lonely, dreary, terrifying the situations! But, amidst the howlings of the wilderness, and the horrors of the woods, they shall dwell safely *there*, and sleep soundly *there*. So David, when Absalom had driven him from his palace, and he had a few troops to support him in the field, garrisoned himself in God: "I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety."

## SEPTEMBER 13.—MORNING.

"And he said, Lord God, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?" GEN. xv. 8.

—WHY, had not God that very moment promised it? And was not his word sufficient?

They surely have never made the trial who imagine that it is an easy thing to believe. To confide in a Being invisible, and whom we have so deeply offended, and to hang our everlasting hope upon his naked truth, requires the exertion of the power that raised up Christ from the dead. Who never feels in him the working of an evil heart of unbelief? Our Lord upbraided his own Apostles with their want of faith. And even the father of the faithful desires something more than God's engagement to give him the land of Canaan—Whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?

Yet God pardoned his servant in this thing; and stooped to his weakness; and yielded him what he required. And Abraham was satisfied with the sign and the seal.

There is a better country, even a heavenly. The possession of it is an object worthy of all our concern. And they who love it and seek it supremely cannot leave their claim undecided and uncertain: and therefore their language will be, "Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation"—"Give me a token for good"—"Whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?"

"Why, you have the promise of God, who cannot lie!" Yes: and this infallibly insures it, to all those to whom it belongs—But who are the heirs

of promise? Away with dreams, and visions, and sounds in the air, and impulses, and accidental occurrences of passages of Scripture. We have surer evidence. We have unerring proofs, furnished by God himself. Search his word with diligence and prayer. *There* you will find, not the names indeed of the heirs of eternal life; but their characters—their qualities—their taste—their choice—their way—their aim.

Let me fix on one of these vouchers only—It is, a preparation for the blessedness. Where this is found, the title can never be absent. The Apostle therefore gives “thanks to the Father, who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.” In another place he says, “he hath wrought us for the selfsame thing.” And he does nothing in vain. If he has, by the agency of his Holy Spirit, fitted you in the temper of your soul for the world of glory, you may be assured that he designs you for it. If you bear the image of the heavenly, you will partake of their condition. If you have the dawn of that blessed state, you will have the day. Grace is of the same nature with glory: they differ only in the degree. Is heaven not only the high but the holy place into which entereth nothing that defileth? and do you hunger and thirst after righteousness?—Does the blessedness consist in adoring the Lamb that was slain; and in being like him; and in seeing him as he is? And are you now glorying only in his Cross; and following him in the regeneration; and praying that you may know him in the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings?—Will the distinctions in life, now allowable and necessary, be done away; and only those remain which arise

from character? And are you valuing persons, not according to their outward circumstances, but their real, their moral, their spiritual worth?—As no inquiry will be made there, *where we have worshipped*, but *how*: nor to what denomination we pertained; but whether we were Jews inwardly—can you now pray from the heart, “Grace be with *all* them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity”? Can you now say, “*Whosoever shall do the will of my Father who is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother?*” Then heaven is already begun, and therefore insured; for we are confident of this very thing, that he which hath *begun* a good work in you will *perform it until the day of Jesus Christ*. If you can take the representations of the employments and enjoyments of heaven given us in the Scripture; and can *desire* these things; and *hope* for these things; and find your *liberty* and *happiness* in them; you have the earnest of the inheritance, and are sealed by the Holy Spirit of God unto the day of redemption. Let me not then, O my soul! be faithless, but believing; and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

## SEPTEMBER 13.—EVENING.

“For we must needs die, and are as water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again: neither doth God respect any person: yet doth he devise means, that his banished be not expelled from him.”

2 SAM. xiv. 14.

JOAB was resolved to reconcile David to Absalom. For which purpose he “sent to Tekoah, and fetched thence a wise woman, and said unto her, I pray thee, feign thyself to be a mourner, and put on now mourning apparel, and anoint not thyself with oil, but be as

a woman that had a long time mourned for the dead." Though she is called "wise," she seems very little deserving of the appellation, unless she displayed more wisdom on former occasions than she does in the present instance. For there is scarcely one article in the whole of her long wordy address that pertinently and justly bears on the subject. Joab indeed furnished her with the leading part of her story—for it does not deserve the name of reasoning. But he had an unjustifiable measure to accomplish, and therefore he did as well as he could, to make the worse appear the better cause. He was also aware that "the king's heart was toward Absalom." He knew what tune pleased David, and therefore he depended not on the goodness of the music, but the nature of the effect. And accordingly, weak and irrelevant as the statement was, it succeeded! For, as

"He that's convinced against his will  
Is of the same opinion still;"

so, when a man is inclined to a particular course, a little child may lead him.

We may here remark, and it is of importance in reading the Scriptures to observe it, that the Holy Ghost does not sanction as righteous, or as true, every thing recorded in them. The sacred writers relate facts as they occurred, leaving us to employ our reason in distinguishing things that differ. We are not to believe all the arguings of Job's friends because they are found in the book of Job; it is obvious that they sometimes laid down wrong principles, and at other times drew unfair inferences from right ones. And, in the Ecclesiastes, Solomon more than once

utters sentiments not as matters of his own credence, but as the language of worldlings, or libertines, whose objections he would answer.

Let us apply this to the case before us. The woman having by a kind of parable drawn from David a sentence of censure and condemnation, which, as she supposed, affected himself, she makes an application of it—"Let thine handmaid, I pray thee, speak one word unto my lord the king. And he said, Say on. And the woman said, Wherefore then hast thou thought such a thing against the people of God? for the king doth speak this thing as one which is faulty, in that the king doth not fetch home again his banished." And then, to enforce her suit, she adds; "The word of my Lord the king shall now be comfortable: for as an angel of God, so is my lord the king to discern good and bad: therefore the Lord thy God will be with thee." She adduces two arguments. The first drawn from man's mortality: "For we must needs die, and are as water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again; neither doth God respect any person"—As much as to say, Amnon would have died if he had not been slain by his brother. Absalom will die, and severity may hasten the event. Thou, David, though a king, art dying, and will become as one of the people—This was a poor reason for dispensing with civil justice against a murderer and a fratricide. Yet the argument is true in itself; and there are cases on which it will be found to bear—cases of private and personal injury, and where we are required not to avenge ourselves. Has a fellow-creature offended you? The offender will soon be incapable of receiv-

ing forgiveness, and you will soon be beyond the power of exercising it. Whatsoever therefore thine hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, knowledge, repentance, or wisdom, in the grave whither thou goest. Remember, that anger *resteth* in the bosom of fools. Let not the sun go down upon your wrath. Especially, let not life close upon you before you are reconciled to your brother. Would you enter the presence of God implacable? Yet there is but a step between you and death—Boast not thyself of to-morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.

The second is drawn from God's goodness: "Yet doth he devise means that his banished be not expelled from him"—And therefore, as if she would say, resemble him, and be like him, not only in power, but in clemency and kindness. This again is a poor plea in favour of the impunity of a public malefactor. We are not to spare those who deserve to suffer by the laws of the land because God is merciful and gracious. The minister of God is not to bear the sword in vain. He is set for the punishment of evildoers, as well as for the praise of them that do well. Yet the argument is true in itself; and applies to cases of private and personal office. *There* we are required to exercise forgiveness; and it is enforced by this very motive. Hence, says the Apostle, "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evilspeaking, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." To which we add the parable of the Saviour; "Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord,

how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times; but, Until seventy times seven.—So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses."

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SEPTEMBER 14.—MORNING.

"Leap not unto thine own understanding." PROV. iii. 5.

THE understanding is a natural faculty, by which man is distinguished from inanimate creatures, and also from the animal world. The sun, and moon, and sea, and rivers, are impressed by laws, of which they know nothing; and follow their destiny, wholly unconscious of the operations they perform. The beasts of the field, and the fowls of the air, have an instinct which often surprises us. But while it is wonderfully exact as far as it goes, it is exceedingly limited: it admits of no variety or progression. These beings are no wiser now than when they went to Noah for shelter, and to Adam for names—But there is a spirit in man; and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding. By means of this endowment he can look backward and forward. He can examine and judge. He can survey principles in their abstraction; and duties in their circumstances; and actions in their moral bearings. He can refuse the evil, and choose the good, against present feelings and imposing appearances.

This faculty, from the lowest degree of reason to the highest reach of intellect, is the gift of God, the

Father of lights; and should be cultivated by us as men and as Christians. We should rejoice that we live in a country and in an age so favourable to all kinds of information. It is a sad reproach to many, that in the midst of knowledge they are found so ignorant as they are: it must be the result of dissipation or sloth.

But though we are to prize, and improve, and make use of our understanding, we are not to *lean* to it. Yet, if we were not prone to this, the caution would be needless. There is nothing of which men are so proud as their knowledge. There are more than a few who would rather be charged with a want of principle than a want of cleverness; and would rather pass for knaves than fools. This regard seems, indeed, to be a kind of equalizer of the human race; and the only thing with which all are satisfied, and in which they feel an ineffable complacency, is their *own* understanding. They lean to their *own* understanding, in preference to the understanding of others; whom yet, if asked, they would consider as very superior to themselves, both in capacity and experience. They may indeed consult with an adviser; but it is in hope of finding a confirmation of their own opinion: and should his judgment differ from their conclusion, they would feel little difficulty in resolving by which to abide. We frequently see this in those who are just entering the world, and so much need a guide, to escape those early mistakes that may affect the whole of their future life. Whatever quickness of perception they may possess they must surely be destitute of that practical wisdom that grows out of observation.

and trial. Yet how little do "the younger submit themselves to the elder!"

—Men carry this disposition even into the things of God. They regard their own reason more than his word; and are reluctant to believe what they cannot comprehend. We are told that Alphonsus, the royal astronomer, having apprehended some seeming irregularities among the heavenly bodies, was daring enough to say, "Had I been by the Creator when he made the world, I could have given him some good advice." We justly shudder at his profaneness; and yet who has not fallen into a similar error? Who has not found fault with God in his manner of governing the world, the Church, the family, the individual? Who has not been ready to direct the Spirit of the Lord; and, being his counsellor, to teach him?

To preserve us from this tendency, Let us remember how limited our own understanding is; how many subjects there are entirely beyond its reach; and that there is nothing with which it is perfectly acquainted. Let us also reflect how much we are impressed by appearances; and how different these often are from the realities of things. "Who knoweth what is good for a man in this life; all the days of his vain life, which he spendeth as a shadow?" What should we have been at this hour if things had always accorded with our mind and wishes? Let us look back, and see how frequently we have erred, both in our hopes and fears. We now clearly see, that what we so eagerly desired would have proved our injury or ruin; and that what we were so anxious to escape has conduced to our best welfare: so that

we can say, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted."

We are very incompetent to judge for ourselves, because we know not the influence other and untried events will exert upon us. To these we go forward with our present views and feelings; not aware that new scenes will produce new views and feelings; and may unfold secrets in our character of which we have no conceptions, and which may fill us not only with surprise, but dismay. Thus, when Eliasha predicted, with tears, the atrocities and cruelties he would commit, Hazael shuddered at the thought, and sincerely exclaimed, "What! is thy servant a dog, that he should do this thing?" the man of God only answered, "The Lord hath shewed me that thou shalt be king over Syria." And his elevation transformed him from the man to the monster which he had execrated!

And if, by leaning to our own understanding, we take one wrong step, what consequences, immediate or remote, personal or relative, may arise from it! See this in David. I shall now perish, said he, one day, by the hand of Saul: "There is nothing better for me than that I should speedily escape into the land of the Philistines." The oracle, had he consulted it, would not have told him so. In truth, it was the worst measure he could have devised. It tended to alienate the affections of his countrymen; to justify the reproaches of his enemies; to deprive himself of the means of grace; to put himself out of the Divine protection; and to lay him under obligations to a benefactor he could not oblige without betraying the cause of God. Accordingly, he was

soon drawn into a scandalous equivocation with Achish. Then he was ordered to go and fight against his own people Israel. And when he was released from this embarrassment, and went back, he found that, in his absence, his residence and property had been destroyed, and his family carried away captives. "O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." Lot leaned to his own understanding; and chose the vale of Sodom, which was well watered, like the garden of the Lord. By this movement he separated himself from intercourse with his pious uncle. He was taken captive by the confederate kings. He was strangely induced to reside in the town itself; and dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul, from day to day, with their unlawful deeds. At length he was burnt out of house and home. His wife, for looking back, became a pillar of salt; so that he never after could go or gaze that way. His daughters, contaminated by the vices of the place—But we dare not go on. Trust in the Lord with all thine heart—Lean not to thine own understanding—In all thy ways acknowledge HIM, and HE shall direct thy paths.

## SEPTEMBER 14.—EVENING.

"We must needs die, and are as water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again; neither doth God respect any person."

2 SAM. xiv. 14.

HERE we are reminded that we are under a necessity of dying; that the effect is irretrievable; and that the stroke is without partiality.

—"We must needs die." The necessity was not

original, but induced by the Fall. It resulted **not** from nature, but sin—“By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death hath passed upon all men, because all have sinned.” All creatures die; yet we never speak of a mortal bird or a mortal beast, but only of a mortal man. He only deserves the epithet as a reproach. He only was made immortal; but he degraded himself from the dignity, and being in honour abode not, but made himself like the beasts that perish. *Now* it is appointed unto men once to die. It is the present law of their nature: and from history, observation, and experience; from the numberless accidents and diseases to which they are exposed; and from the infirmities and decays they feel in their bodies, the living know that they shall die.

—“And be as water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again.” When we see our little family asleep, we are not alarmed or concerned, though they are unconscious of our presence, and for the time know not any thing: because we have it in our power to restore the sensibility when we please; yea, nature, if left to itself, will soon recover it. But while suspended over the breathless corpse, in vain we watch to see a movement—we speak in vain—and touch the cold cheek in vain—and we bury our dead out of our sight. We are not denying a future state of existence, but we have no restoration from the grave *here*. “O spare me,” says David, “that I may recover strength before I go hence and am no more.” “In the morning,” says Job, “ye shall seek me—but I shall not be.” Ah! could we re-gather their precious remains, and inspire and revive them; Rachel would no longer

"weep for her children, and refuse to be comforted, because they were not;" Jacob would no longer say, "Joseph is not;" at the domestic table "David's seat" would no longer be "empty;" nor would the lonely friend heave any more at the thought, "We took sweet counsel together, and walked to the house of God in company." But in vain we seek them—They are gone the way whence they shall not return—The places that knew them shall know them no more for ever.

—"Neither doth God respect any person." He does not overlook the little, or fear the great. He does not spare the poor from pity, or the rich from favour. He is not moved by the venerableness of age or the charms of infancy. He gives the destroyer a universal commission, and orders him to strike impartially as to time, place, and manner. Youth, and beauty, and strength, and learning, and wisdom, and usefulness, lie down equally in the dust. "No man knoweth either love or hatred by all that is before them. All things come alike to all: there is one event to the righteous, and to the wicked; to the good, and to the clean, and to the unclean; to him that sacrificeth, and to him that sacrificeth not: as is the good, so is the sinner; and he that sweareth, as he that feareth an oath."

"But the wide difference that remains  
Is endless joy or endless pains."

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## SEPTEMBER 15.—MORNING.

"Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" *Acts ix. 6.*

THIS is a very marvellous question, considering from whom it came. For the inquirer, till now, had hated the name of Jesus; and was at this very time actually engaged in the persecution of his followers. What would he have thought if some one could have told him previously, that in a few hours, in a few moments, he would be a worshipper at the feet of the Nazarene! But so it was; and he trembling and astonished, said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?

Let us never despair. The chief of sinners are within his reach. He has a mighty arm; strong is his hand and high is his right hand. What changes has his grace already accomplished: and what changes must it accomplish still, if the promise is to be fulfilled, "Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir-tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle-tree: and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off"! But let us make this inquiry our own. It is every way worthy of our adoption.

It is personal in its aim—Lord, what wilt thou have *me* to do? Many seem more anxious to reprove others than to know their own faults; and are busily employed in pulling the mote out of their brother's eye, while a beam is in their own. Some are always reading and hearing for others. And we have known persons applying, in a sermon, to some fellow-worshipper things which every one else in the assembly

would have deemed most proper for their own use. We should think of ourselves in divine things; and bring home every truth to our own business and bosoms, whether it encourages or censures. We should pray, Search *me*, O God, and know my heart; try *me*, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any evil way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. When our Lord had informed Peter of his duty and destiny, Peter saw John coming towards him, and asked, Lord, and what shall *this* man do? But our Saviour said, What is that to thee? follow thou *me*.

It is practical in its subject—What wilt thou have me to *do*? Not to know, to hear, to believe, to talk of. Religion, indeed, extends to every thing: but every thing is not essential to it. But practice is indispensable. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them. Faith, without works, is dead, being alone. Though a man say he hath faith, and hath not works, can faith save him? Every part of the truth, as it is in Jesus, has a bearing upon the heart and the life of the receiver; and is according to godliness.

It is impartial in its desire—Lord, *what* wilt thou have me to do? I do not prescribe. I do not select. I do not prefer—Thy pleasure alone I ask to know, and am resolved to follow—Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth. True obedience is compatible with defects; but not with partialities. If a man regards some things, and not o'thers, in religion, those he regards he regards from some other motive than the will of God: for *this* would lead him to regard the one as well as the other; seeing they are all enjoined

by the very same authority. He that offends in one point is guilty of all; not in the act, but in the principle: he violates the authority of the whole. For he that said, Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together, said also, Enter into thy closet. If therefore you engage in public worship, and never retire for devotion, you are an offender. He that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill: now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the Law. We never can truly obey, therefore, unless we can say, with David, I esteem all thy commandments concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way.

## SEPTEMBER 15.—EVENING

"He did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord."

2 CHRON. xxxiii. 2.

MANASSEH, of whom these words are spoken, is a name proverbial for wickedness. This indeed is not invariably a sure rule to go by. A man cannot always be judged of by his infamy, any more than by his fame. Subjects have been called rebels, when they have only been maintaining their lawful rights. Christians, because they were not understood by their calumniators, have been deemed enthusiasts when they have only spoken the words of truth and soberness. A public charity wears the dishonoured name of Magdalene, as if she had been a prostitute of the grossest description before she became a follower of our Lord, and ministered to him of her substance: whereas, however we explain her case as having been dispossessed of seven devils, it imports nothing against her previous virtue.

But Manasseh well deserves all the infamy attached to his character. Witness the portrait given us by the pen of Inspiration. Witness his oppression and cruelty—"Manasseh shed innocent blood very much, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to the other." The language is doubtless hyperbolical. But take it in the lowest sense consistent with truth, and how many persons under false pretences must have perished by public execution or private assassination to gratify his avarice, ambition, or revenge! For it was not the blood of criminals, but innocent blood, that he poured out in such torrents; and we have reason to believe that a great portion of the victims suffered for the sake of religion. Early ecclesiastical history asserts, we know not on what foundation, that Isaiah was sawn asunder by his order. Witness his idolatries—"He built again the high places which Hezekiah his father had broken down; and he reared up altars for Baalim, and made groves, and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served them." Witness his superstition—"And he caused his children to pass through the fire in the valley of the son of Hinnom;" that is, he either sacrificed his offspring to Moloch, or dedicated them to the service of the idol, to be employed in the execrable rites of his worship. Witness his infernal alliances—"He observed times, and used enchantments, and used witchcraft, and dealt with a familiar spirit, and with wizards." Witness his open contempt of every thing sacred—"And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the Lord. And he set a carved image, the idol which he had made, in the house of God, of which God had said to David and to Solomon

his son, In this house, and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen before all the tribes of Israel, will I put my Name for ever." Witness his concern and zeal to corrupt others—"So Manasseh made Jecah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to err, and to do worse than the heathen, whom the Lord had destroyed before the children of Israel." From the parallel passage in the book of Kings, it is said, "He seduced them." His example, being in high life, would be very influential: but he *exerted* himself to lead others astray; and what means and resources could such a man employ! Witness the aggravations of his guilt. He was piously descended. His father was the good Hezekiah. The palace in which he had been brought up was none other than the house of God and the gate of heaven. He had been under the care of pious priests and prophets. How much had he to unlearn! But he could not unlearn it; he had therefore to fight with conviction, and to overcome all the remonstrances, and to get rid of all the uneasinesses of conscience. He was also Divinely warned from time to time: this is the meaning—"And the Lord spake to Manasseh, and to his people: but they would not hearken." And this impenitence crowned and confirmed all his iniquity—

And now what think you of this representation, on the truth of which we can perfectly rely? Is it not painful and humiliating to reflect upon it? Yet this man was a partaker of our own nature; and if we do not resemble him, are we to glory in ourselves? Yea, ought we not to be thankful? All have not the same opportunities and temptations. Who can tell what they might have been, had they encountered the

perils in which others have been wrecked? What would any of us have been in a world like this without Divine restraints? "There goes John Bradford but for the grace of God," would the martyr exclaim when he beheld a transgressor. Our Lord therefore leads us from the effects to the hidden cause, and fixes on the human heart. "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies." According to this decision, the principles of the blackest crimes in practice, lie in the recesses of many a character that appears fair to men. They are not suffered to spring up; but who will not honestly own that he has felt them in their most secret workings? Anger is the germ of malice; lust, of sensuality; covetousness, of theft. A desire to conceal the excellences of another from ourselves, or from the world, genders false witness. Hard conceptions of God lead to blasphemy. Ah! how little permission of Providence, or encouragement from circumstances, do the evils of our nature require, to bring them into exercise, and to degrade us to a level with the vilest of the vile—Lord, what is man!

And what think you of the pardon and renovation of such a sinner! "Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?" Should we not, in reading his history, have expected that he would perish, a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men? But God's thoughts and God's ways are not ours. Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound—Manasseh is saved!

When the elder brother heard of the reception of the prodigal, he was angry, and would not go in. And such mercy as Manasseh experienced may be of

fensive to some now, who trust in themselves that they are righteous, and despise others. "Of what use are our good breeding and morals? What! are the dregs of depravity to be saved as well as we? and to enter into life with us?" Yes; and if you had the mind of Christ, and if you were like angels, who rejoice when a sinner repenteth, you would gladly hail any of your fellow-creatures who were the subjects of such free and sovereign goodness, and magnify the God that displays it. Every penitent may say with David, when recovered from his fall, "They that fear thee will be glad when they see me, because I have hoped in thy truth."

Such mercy may be abused: and it is abused by those who continue in sin that grace may abound; who hope that God, who is so ready to pardon, will not be severe to mark what they do amiss, but that when they can sin no longer, he will, by some extraordinary interposition, subdue their unwillingness, and deliver them from the condition in which they now voluntarily continue. But how dreadful is it to be evil because God is good? Is this likely to gain his favour? He is merciful; but his mercy is exercised in harmony with all the perfections of his nature. And his goodness is designed to lead us to repentance. And now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation. His Spirit is now striving with you; but if you refuse to fall in with his motions, he may righteously decline to address you in future, and hide from your eyes the things that belong to your peace. You cannot deserve his grace; but you may provoke his wrath, and nothing is so sure to provoke it as your "doing despite unto the Spirit of grace."

But such an instance of mercy should encourage you if you are disposed to return to the Lord. Then, however guilty, you have no reason to despair. "Come," says he, "and let us reason together; though your sins were as scarlet they shall be white as snow; though they were red like crimson they shall be as wool."

And let it animate us in our concern for others. Whatever lengths they have gone, let us never consider any of our fellow-creatures abandoned, so as to give up prayer and the use of means—And let us use them in the faith of him who is mighty to save—Is any thing too hard for the Lord?

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## SEPTEMBER 16.—MORNING.

"Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Acts ix. 6.

BEFORE we yield ourselves to any one, we should have full confidence in him; and the confidence should be founded on knowledge. To no fellow-creature can we wholly resign ourselves, either of right, or with safety; for, as he has no title to us, so we know not what his depravity may require of us. We owe duties to our fellow-creatures; and to many of them we may say, What wilt thou have me to do? Yet we must obey *them* only "in the Lord." But *his* authority is supreme. He has infinite claims to my implicit homage.

Five principles demand, and more than justify, the absolute surrender of myself to him, saying, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?

First. The righteousness and excellency of his

requirements. Each of his prohibitions only says, Do thyself no harm. Each of his injunctions is an order to be wise, and rich, and noble, and happy. While following him, my understanding never blushes: my conscience never reproaches me. I can give a reason for my obedience, as well as my hope. His will is always a reasonable service—His work is honourable and glorious.

Secondly. The relations in which he stands to his people. He is their husband—He is their father—He is their master—He is their sovereign—He is their maker, from whom they have derived all they have and are. And surely in each of these it becomes them to ask, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?”

Thirdly. His greatness. This is unsearchable. He is Lord of all. All the angels of God worship him. All things were created by him, and for him: and he is before all things; and by him all things consist. His greatness is necessary to the illustration of his goodness; and crowns it with glory and honour. What condescension is there where there is no dignity? But he was in the form of God, and took upon him the form of a servant.—There was the stoop! He was rich; and for our sakes became poor.—There was the grace! Greatness alone produces not attachment, but dread and aversion. But while He has all power in heaven and in earth, he is full of grace and truth.

Therefore, Fourthly, the obligations he has laid us under by his kindness. What are the obligations any of our fellow-creatures have laid us under? What have they done for us? What have they suffered for us? How few how inconsiderable, how

unexpensive, how unattended with any thing like sacrifice and self-denial, have their acts of favour been! But he, without our desert, and against the greatest demerit, remembered us in our low estate; and, in his love and pity, redeemed us. And how? He was made a curse for us. He bore our sins in his own body on the tree. By his stripes we are healed. Where does he stand? how does he appear? when he says, My son give me thy heart?

“ See, from his head, his hands, his feet,  
Sorrow and love flow mingled down;  
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,  
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?”

And can we wonder at the result?

“ Were the whole realm of Nature mine,  
That were a present far too small;  
Love so amazing, so divine,  
Demands my soul, my life, my all.”

No legal process ever produced this surrender. The display of terror and mere authority never made one cordial convert to any cause. Would you be induced to love another by his commanding you to do so; or by his threatening you if you did not? No; but by a display of love. Love begets love. And we love him, because he first loved us. At the Cross we are effectually wooed and won. There we are drawn, and there we are bound with cords of a man and the bands of love.

Lastly. His engagement to reward our devotedness to him. Christians are not mercenary; but they cannot serve him for nought. The recompence must be of grace, and not of works: but so much the better is it for the largeness of their hope; for it

is to be measured and judged of, not according to their doings, but his own abundant mercy, which it is designed to display. Hence will he say at last, with regard to these poor performances over which they have blushed and wept, "Well done, good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." But he is not unrighteous to forget their work of faith, and labour of love, even now. *In* keeping his commandments there is great reward. Great peace have they that love his law; and nothing shall offend them. He is the best of masters. He furnishes them with ability for their work. He lays no more upon his servants than he enables them to bear. He will comfort them in affliction. He will not cast them off in old age. He will remember the kindness of their youth. When heart and flesh fail, he will be the strength of their heart and their portion for ever. And at death, receive them to himself; that where he is there they may be also.

Sinners talk of the pleasures of sin; but they never commend them at last. The people of the world boast of its amusements and delights; but they never speak well of the world at parting. In every season, in every condition, however trying, the Christian can say—Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, O Lord.

"Then Peter said, Lo, we have left all, and followed thee. And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting.

## SEPTEMBER 16.—EVENING.

"I was wounded in the house of my friends."

ZECH. xiii. 6.

FRIENDSHIP is a boon which has always been highly valued and extolled. It has been called the charm of life, and the balm of grief. He is deeply pitiable who has not a friend ; and he is in a most privileged condition who has never had reason to complain, "I was wounded in the house of my friends."

We are formed for society ; we love society ; we need society ; we derive much of our happiness from society ; and yet in one way or another our connexions are very expensive things. There are here, so to speak, four kinds of wounds.

First, those that arise from the honest and salutary reprehensions of our friends. Solomon commends these by way of contrast : "faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful." Instead of complaining of these, we shall be thankful for them, if we are like-minded with David ; "Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness ; and let him reprove me, it shall be an excellent oil which shall not break my head : for yet my prayer also shall be in their calamities."

Secondly, those that result from their sufferings. Paul speaks of the comforts of love : but it has its sorrows too. If I love another, and in proportion as I love him, I shall make his case my own : I shall weep when he weeps : I shall bear his burden when he is oppressed : and perhaps suffer as much by sympathy as he himself suffers, when I hear him cry,

"Pity me, pity me, O ye my friends, for the hand of God hath touched me."

Thirdly, those which are produced by our being bereaved of them. There are few but have felt these losses: while some have had peculiar reason to sigh, "I sit, and am alone, as a sparrow upon the house-top."—"Lover and friend hast thou put far from me, and mine acquaintance into darkness." Oh! the anxieties that precede—the anguish that accompanies—the dreariness that follows—the feeling of heart-desolation that arises at the sight of the walks in which we communed with them, the seats they occupied, the books they folded down, the flowers they planted—the nightly visitations of thought when darkness and wakefulness let in busy memory, to recall the past, and open the wounds afresh which time had tried to heal!

Fourthly, Those which are inflicted by their improper conduct. Even the sincere are imperfect; and may wound us by ignorance, rudeness, wayward temper, misapprehension, and censure without cause. But some are altogether vanity and lies. Their friendship is a mere flash of feeling. It is the working of selfishness, during which they make you their scaffolding, and then lay you aside. They only elevate to depress; they only flatter to spread a snare for your feet; they only insinuate themselves into your bosom to prove the viper there.

Thus therefore we often hear of being wounded in the house of friends. But though many make the complaint, few seem concerned to improve it. And thus they bleed in vain, while it is possible for them to derive a remedy for the poison, and to turn

their losses into gain. In all these murmurings or lamentations about friends, we should do well to inquire whether we have done nothing to deserve what we suffer: for often we may trace our sin in our trials. The blame is not always on the side of the censured: the most complaining is frequently the most culpable. He that will have friends must shew himself friendly; and attachment must be supported in the same way that it was gained.

We should also consider whether we do not complain without just cause. We talk of the wounds we have received, when perhaps they are hardly incisions skin-deep. We are not to look for perfection; but remember that as every relation in life is filled with fallen creatures, so it will necessarily partake of human infirmity. And what! are we to exact from others a faultlessness which they never met with in us? Neither should we become, in these cases, misanthropic; harbourers of suspicions; and railers against our fellow-creatures at large. David said, "All men are liars;" but it was "in his haste;" and he acknowledged his rashness and injustice.

We may, however, regulate and modify our regard, and especially our dependence and expectation: and we ought to hear the voice of the word, when it is feelingly enforced by events: "Cease from man, whose breath is in his nostrils; for wherein is he to be accounted of?" Blessed is the man who trusteth in the Lord; and whose hope the Lord is. He will not, he cannot fail us. See the use the Prophet made of what he was compelled to acknowledge—"Trust ye not in a friend, put ye not confidence in a guide; keep the doors of thy mouth from her that

lieth in thy bosom. For the son dishonoureth the father, the daughter riseth up against her mother, the daughter in law against her mother in law; a man's enemies are the men of his own house. Therefore I will look unto the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation; my God will hear me."

Should we not also do well to make the conduct of our fellow-creatures towards us a glass in which to contemplate our conduct towards God? Then must our severity fall upon ourselves much more heavily than upon others. For what are our claims upon our connexions, compared with God's claims upon us? And what are the forgetfulness, and ingratitude, and perverseness, and unkindness, and treachery of those we have befriended, compared with the instances of vileness, which our infinite Benefactor has constantly to witness in us? It is a good turn which Watts gives to our reflections upon the state of the Jews—

"Great God! how oft did Israel prove,  
By turns, thine anger and thy love!  
There in a glass our hearts may see  
How fickle and how false they be."

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"Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money: that take, and give unto them for me and thee." MATT. xvii. 27.

IN the midst of this supernatural scene, a sanction is thus given by our Saviour to the use of means. The supply was, in its source, preparation, and an-

nouncement, miraculous; yet Peter, who is to receive it as a favour, is to procure it by his instrumentality. The peculiar nature of the instance only renders it the more conclusive: for if our Lord would not dispense with the use of means in an extraordinary case, surely he will not dispense with it in an ordinary one. Some good, but not very wise, people seem to think that instrumentality detracts from the Divine glory; and that God is honoured more by acting *im*-mediately. But instrumentality supposes and requires agency: and the means themselves are always the Lord's own; and he gives them their success. His producing an effect by various concurrences and co-operations displays more of his perfections, and gives more opportunity to observe them, than his causing a result by an instant volition.

Here was something which Peter could do, and something which he could not do. He could not replenish the fish with the money, or make it to swim in the direction of his bait: but he could procure the bait and throw in the hook; and in the most likely place; and stand; and watch. Why does he not cause the fish to spring ashore? and appear at once upon Peter's table? Because he would not sanction indolence. Because he would render even his miracles moral, as well as marvellous. Because his exertions were not a mere parade of power; but a display of wisdom and goodness, meeting indigence, relieving weakness, confirming faith: but not encouraging folly and presumption; teaching us to trust, but forbidding us to tempt him.

In like manner, there is always something which we cannot do; and something which we can do. But the evil is, that we commonly derive from the former excuses for our neglect of the latter; and so God's agency becomes a reason for our inactivity, instead of exciting our diligence. But this is perfectly contrary to the meaning of the Apostle, when he says, "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God which worketh in you to will and to do of his good pleasure." In natural things we are wiser. Can the husbandman produce an ear of corn? He knows it is perfectly impossible. But he can manure, and plough, and sow; and in the use of these he expects the Divine efficiency—but never in the neglect of them. No man can quicken his own soul. Yet there are means which are designed and adapted to save us: and we can pray, "Come, thou north wind; and blow, thou south." It is thus that religion possesses the evidence of analogy; and, in the God of grace, we see the God of nature. He feeds the fowls of the air, not by putting it into their mouths; but by furnishing provision; and giving them wings, and eyes, and feet, and beaks to find and make it their own. "That thou givest them, they gather"—And thus, "he satisfies the desire of every living thing." He could warm us without the fire, and sustain us without food; but we know what would be the consequence were we to disregard these, under a notion of honouring him by a dependence on his *agency*.

Though the effect here was beyond the means, yet there was an *adaptation* in them. Peter was a fisherman; and he is employed in his own line: and his

fishing was not only the condition of the result, but the medium, and *conduced to* it. And, in general, we may observe, that while the insufficiency of the means serves to display the power of God, the suitableness of them shows his wisdom. And such a suitableness there is. A pen cannot write without a hand to use it; yet there is an adaptation in the instrument to the work. Some seem to use the means of grace only as *tests* of their submission to the Divine appointment—not as things which have a real tendency even in themselves to do them good. They expect the Divine blessing *in* them, but not *by* them—that is, not as an effect resulting *from* them under the Divine influence—as if in the use of them they were planting and watering pebbles, which, by an Almighty exertion, *could* be made to yield produce—instead of using them as a man sows wheat, and looks for wheat to arise from it. Faith cometh *by* hearing; and hearing tends to produce it, by informing and convincing the mind. The same may be said of a religious education, in forming the moral and pious character of the child.

Peter did well not to disobey, or reason; but to follow implicitly the Divine order; fully expecting success. And he was not and could not be disappointed. And thus let us act without murmuring or disputing. Let us use the means which he has prescribed, not only swayed by his authority, but relying on his promise, that none of those that wait for him shall be ashamed.

## SEPTEMBER 17.—EVENING.

"As he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy ~~in all manner~~ of conversation." 1 PET. i. 15.

CHRISTIANITY is not only, as we see in the preceding verses, a system of grace, but of holiness also; and however the term may be abused or despised, the professors of the Gospel are to be distinguished as saints. Observe the extent and the enforcement of the obligation they are under.

They are to be "holy in all manner of conversation." The word conversation, as now used, signifies discourse; and no little of our religion consists in the sanctification of our speech: but the term has never this acceptation in the Scripture. There it always intends carriage, deportment, the course of action. It would be easy to prove this; but it is needless. Let us rather observe, that no part of a Christian's conduct is to be uninfluenced by sanctity. He is to be holy "in all manner of conversation." His holiness is to be universal, with regard to times, with regard to places, with regard to conditions, with regard to circumstances. It is to appear not only in devotional exercises, but in common actions; and whether he eats or drinks, or whatever he does, he is to do all to the glory of God. Not that he can be always distinctly thinking on this end; but, by making the word of God his rule, all he does has this tendency and effect. Paul regarded a thousand claims; yet, as he made all his actions conduce to the same purpose, he speaks, as if he had but one engagement: "This one thing I do." The husbandman manures, ploughs, sows, weeds, reaps, gathers

into barns, threshes, fans, and sells: yet all he does is one thing; and that is comprised in husbandry. Even real religion is defective in its degree, but it is always impartial in its regards; and enables the possessor to say, "I esteem all thy commandments concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way."

The reason why we are to be thus holy is, "because he who called us is holy." We must therefore resemble him. He everywhere proposes himself as our example. We are commanded to be followers of him as dear children. We are renewed after the image of him that created us. Observe the excellency of holiness—It makes us like God—and like him in his highest excellency!

As we cannot be conformed to him, so neither can we love him, without holiness. They are only the "saints of his" that can "rejoice and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness." But they, being partakers of his holiness, feel congenial with his very nature; and delight in his law, his Gospel, his ordinances, his people, as they all appear in the beauties of holiness.

Without holiness, too, it is impossible for us to enjoy him. How can two walk together except they be agreed? What communion hath righteousness with unrighteousness? Without holiness no man shall see the Lord—no man can see him: he is wholly unprepared for the state, the work, the pleasure. But the holiness which makes us meet for the inheritance of the saints in light insures the blessedness. God does nothing in vain; but he has thus wrought us for the selfsame thing, and given to us the earnest of the Spirit.

It is therefore no easy matter to be a Christian indeed. Yea, it is an impossible one as to ourselves. But with God all things are possible. There are not only millions around the throne, but multitudes now living, who are his workmanship. "This people," says he, "have I formed for myself, they shall shew forth *my* praise." Instead of endeavouring to fetch holiness out of yourselves, pray, with David, to the God of all grace; "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me."

Christians! under many of your present feelings, you are ready to conclude that your holiness will never be perfect. But be not dismayed. Consider what he has done for you already. How unlikely was it once that you should ever have valued what you now esteem, and have ever desired what you now above all things seek after! Had he been minded to kill you, he would not have shewn you such things as these. He who gave you the will, thereby also furnished you with the pledge of the power. And we are confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. Soon—what a prospect! you will be sinless! faultless! It doth not yet appear what you shall be; but this you know, that when he shall appear, you shall be like him, for you shall see him as he is.

## SEPTEMBER 18.—MORNING.

"I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water."

ZECH. ix. 11.

PERSONS may be prisoners as felons, as robbers, as debtors, as captives taken in war. The character of the subjects of Divine grace, by nature, involved all these.

A pit wherein there is no water is a situation expressive of destitution, wretchedness, and danger. There the victim has nothing to relieve his wants; nothing to quench his raging thirst. He cannot live in it. He cannot escape from it. He is ready to perish. Such was Joseph's pit. Such was Jeremiah's dungeon. In such a condition the Lord finds his people.

—But he does not leave them there. He always produces a change in their favour. If they are darkness, he calls them into his marvellous light. If they are far off, he brings them nigh. If they are prisoners in a pit wherein there is no water, he sends them out of it. In his love and pity he redeems them, and makes them free indeed.

The work is entirely his own; and the principle cannot be mistaken. How unworthy were they of his notice! How great the evil from which they have been rescued! How infinite the blessedness resulting from it! And after such a deliverance as this, shall they again break his commandments? A soul redeemed, demands a life of praise. Let my people go, that they may serve me. What has he sent them out of their bondage to do, but to go and tell sinners,

such as they themselves once were, that with the Lord there is mercy, and with him plenteous redemption? but to shew forth his praise? but to acknowledge, that by the grace of God, they are what they are? but to walk in newness of life? to run in the way of his commandments? to return and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their head?

And can this be a task? Did Zacharias think so when he sung and prayed—"That we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear; in holiness, and righteousness, before him, all the days of our lives"? His service is perfect freedom.

## SEPTEMBER 18.—EVENING.

"Lest any of you be hardened." HEB. iii. 13.

LET us take some views of the evil against which we are here admonished. It may be considered in reference to its seat. In many places, it is spoken of as "the heart." "They hardened their hearts." "All the house of Israel are hard-hearted." It is sometimes represented as "the neck." Nothing can be more common than the expression of hardening the neck. The idea is taken from a refractory ox refusing the yoke, and expresses disobedience to the commands and rejection of the service of God. At other times it is represented as "the face." "They have made their face harder than a rock, they have refused to return." This marks insolence, impudence, shamelessness. But these are all related to each other. The hardness of the heart—of the neck—and of the face, follow each other. Sin is always progressive; and transgressors wax worse and worse.

We may consider the hardness as *natural* and as *acquired*. The heart, though naturally hard, admits of an increase of hardness. Thus Paul says to the Hebrews, " Harden not your heart, as in the provocation." Every call of God we refuse renders us more callous. Every act of sin we commit reduces our awe of God's authority, and prepares us for another commission. The young man first dreads evil company, then endures it, then delights in it. Habits are formed by the repetition of actions; and as well might the Ethiopian change his skin, and the leopard his spots, as they learn to do good who are accustomed to do evil. The hardening of the heart is like the hardening of ice. When the water begins to freeze, it will not bear the weight of a pin; but after some hours, or some days, it is capable of sustaining the heaviest pressure.

We may also observe in this hardness the *concern of the sinner*, and the *concern of God*. We read that "Pharaoh hardened his heart," and at the same time it is said, "God hardened his heart." There is no doubt therefore that there is a part that belongs to God in this business. What is it? And what can it be, to accord with the perfections of his nature, and the language of his word? He cannot properly and absolutely harden the heart. But, First, by his providence he can expose men to those temptations which, meeting with innate and indulged depravity, will aid their impenitence. And, Secondly, he can deny them the means of grace, or withhold or withdraw from them the influence that can alone render them efficacious. Thus God is said to give men up to "a reprobate mind;" and to "strong delusion to believe a

lie." But he never acts thus judicially and penally but as the effect of deep provocation. He never says, "Let them alone," till "they are joined to idols." "Israel would none of me, so I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust; and they walked in their own counsels." "Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their heart, and put the stumblingblock of their iniquity before their face: should I be enquired of at all by them?"

Again; we may distinguish this hardness as *entire*, and as *partial*. Christians are renewed in the spirit of their mind. The stony heart is taken away, and a heart of flesh is given. Yet our Lord said to his own disciples, "Have ye your heart yet hardened?" "And he upbraided them with the hardness of their heart." And Christians may be less lively in their religious duties and affections, not only than they ought to be, but even than they once were. It is indeed well if we feel this; it is a proof that *all* is not hard within: but the want of more sensibility of heart is a great practical evil; and will much lessen our comfort. And the evil is induced by sin: and by little sins as well as by great ones; and by omissions of duty as well as by actual transgression. We are peculiarly liable to this evil when we are indulged—"Because they have no changes, therefore they fear not God." What a difference do we perceive between David as an exile, persecuted from place to place, and as a reigning monarch! With regard to the former; he had such tenderness, that his heart smote him, when he had only cut off the skirt of his enemy's garment: but see the insults and miseries the king inflicted upon the Ammonites, after taking

the city from its brave defenders! Who can bear success and gratification without injury? “Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked; thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick, thou art covered with fatness; then he forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation.” Wherefore keep yourselves in the love of God. Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.

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SEPTEMBER 19.—MORNING.

“Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord.”

Hos. vi. 3.

WHETHER we consider these words as an exhortation and an encouragement addressed by the godly to each other, or to their own souls, they remind us of an important aim; a necessary duty; and an assured privilege.

The *aim* is, “to know the Lord.” For the soul to be without knowledge it is not good. All the operations of the Spirit are begun and carried on in the renewing of the mind. Nothing can be moral or religious in our dispositions and actions, that is not founded in knowledge; because it must be destitute of principle and motive; and the Lord looketh at the heart. Real repentance must arise from proper views of the evil of sin, in connexion with the Cross of Christ—“They shall look upon him whom they have pierced and shall mourn for him.” Even faith is impossible, without knowledge—“For how can they believe in him of whom they have not heard?”

“This,” says the Saviour, “is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.” This declaration not only decides the importance of this knowledge, but also the nature of it—It is not a philosophical knowledge of God, as an almighty being, the maker and upholder of all things; or even a knowledge of him as holy in all his ways, and righteous in all his works. Such views of him, alone, must, on the mind of a sinner, gender dread and aversion. The grand thing in the restoration of a fallen and guilty creature is, to know that He is reconcilable; that He is willing, even now, to become our friend; and has already given undeniable proof that he is waiting to be gracious, and is exalted to have mercy upon him. And all this is only to be seen in the Only Begotten of the Father, who has declared him. God in nature, is God above me; God in providence, is God beyond me; God in law, is God against me; but God in Christ, is God for me and with me. Neither is this knowledge of him a merely speculative acquaintance with him; such as men may possess, who behold, and wonder, and perish. There is a great difference between the decisions of the judgment, and the bias of the will; between the convictions of the conscience, and the submission and acquiescence of the heart. “With the heart man believeth unto righteousness.” “I will give them a heart to know me.” “He hath shined in our heart, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ.”

Connected with this, there is a necessary *duty*. It is, “to follow on” to know the Lord.

This takes in the practice of what we already know. To what purpose would it be for God to afford the light they have not, to those who neglect the light they have? It would only increase their sin and their condemnation. "Whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance; but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath." And we see this constantly exemplified. When men love not to retain God in their knowledge, it is their interest to see things less clearly; and so they part with one truth after another, as it becomes troublesome: till God gives them up to strong delusion to believe a lie. While those who do his will, know of the doctrine; advancing towards the light, they get more into its shining; and, as far as they have already attained, walking by the same rule, and minding the same thing, if in any thing else they be otherwise minded, God reveals even this unto them.

It also includes diligence in the use of appointed means: such as, reading the Scriptures; and hearing the word preached; and meditation; and "walking with wise men;" and, above all, prayer to the Father of lights, according to the promise, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him." "If thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures: then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God."

It must also mean perseverance in this course. "Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates waiting at the posts of my doors." Here

is not only watching, but waiting. Some run well; and are hindered. But we are to run with patience the race that is set before us; and, by patient continuance in well doing, to seek for glory, honour, and immortality.

Nor shall this be in vain. "Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord." The privilege is as sure as the word of God, confirmed by his faithfulness, and all history, and all experience, can make it. And if probability will actuate a man to engage in an enterprise, and continue in a series of exertions and sacrifices, how much more should actual certainty! Let therefore this full assurance of hope excite and influence us in two cases.

The first is with regard to ourselves. The way of the Lord is strength to the upright. Keep his way! and your path shall be as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. Your perplexities shall be solved. Your doubts removed. Your fears subdued. Crooked things shall be made straight; and rough places plain. You shall know more of him in his word, providence, and grace; and more of him as the strength of your heart, and your portion for ever.

The second regards others. Be not impatient if they cannot embrace all your religious views at once; and are amazed at some parts of your experience. In grace as well as in nature, there must be infancy before manhood. Though now their acquaintance with divine things be small, and they only see men as trees walking, the Enlightener will put his hand a second time to the work, and they shall see every thing plainly. If their heart be broken off from sin

and the world; and they are asking the way to Zion with their faces thitherward, they shall not err therein. "Who hath despised the day of small things?"

## SEPTEMBER 19.—EVENING.

"The sin which doth so easily beset us." Heb. xii. 1.

BY this we are to understand, according to Owen, what our divines call indwelling sin. Sin reigns in the children of disobedience. But this is *not* the case with the godly. Sin shall not have dominion over them, for they are not under the law, but under grace. But though it is dethroned in them, it is not as yet destroyed. It still exists and exerts itself. And it may well be called "the sin which so easily besets us," being always near us to assail us in the world, the family, the church, the closet; yea, always in us, working our departure from the living God, vexing our peace, spoiling our performances, and rendering us susceptible of injury from external influences—"The sin," says the Apostle, that dwelleth in me; another law in my members wars against the law of my mind; and the effects of which make me groan, O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? This, as the principle of corruption, and the source of all other evils, we should seek to subdue and destroy. And whoever would see this subject practically and *evangelically* treated, should read the admirable work of Owen, on "the mortification of sin in believers."

But there are various ways in which the same innate depravity may operate. Isaiah speaks of our all going astray; but says, "We have turned every one to his own way." And the expression of the Apostle

has given rise to the notion of some particular sin to which we are more exposed or addicted than to another; and thus we often hear of a man's besetting sin, and easily besetting sin. And it is undeniable, that, by outward circumstances, or natural temperament, some are more inclined to peevishness and fretfulness, some to anger and revenge, some to pride and vanity, some to intemperance and sensuality.

We should imagine that every one must be acquainted with his own peculiar propensity, especially after some course of years. But what is habitual is naturalized; we are blind to our own faults; self-love covers a multitude of sins, and this among the rest. Yet in many cases a man's ignorance, owing to the power and prevalence of the evil, must be mere affectation.

A man's easily-besetting sin is—that to which he is most frequently tempted—and which he is most anxious to conceal—and the discovery and reprehension of which most mortifies and offends him.

Such a sin unsearched after, unbewailed, unopposed, is incompatible with "simplicity and godly sincerity." If we regard the safety and welfare of our souls, however painful the result may be, we shall faithfully examine ourselves. And when we see where we have been most easily overcome, or drawn aside, we shall peculiarly watch and pray, lest we enter into temptation. "A right spirit" will lead us to pass the time of our sojourning here in fear—"Blessed is the man that feareth always."

## SEPTEMBER 20.—MORNING.

"In him is no sin." 1 JOHN iii. 5.

--No sin original. David said, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me. The same may be said by every individual of the human race. Our Saviour was truly a man; but to secure him, in the participation of our nature, from pollution, behold a new thing in the earth! He is made only of a woman: a virgin conceives and bears a son; and that holy thing which is born of her is called the Son of God. His people are holy by renovation: he was so by nature. Even when sanctified, they feel within them a conflict: the flesh and the Spirit oppose each other, and they cannot do the things that they would. But he had no warfare of this kind. He could not say, I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. All his senses, and appetites, and passions, moved in obedience to reason, and in unison with the will of God.

Hence there was in him no sin actual. In proof of this the testimony of his friends may be deemed partial—though they had the best opportunities of knowing him; and they all gloried in the avowal, that he did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth. But hear the multitude—He hath done all things well. Hear the dying thief—This man hath done nothing amiss. Hear Pilate, who judicially examined him—I find no fault in this man: I am pure from the blood of that just man. Hear Judas, the domestic spy, after three years of intimacy with him—I have betrayed innocent blood. No one ever had more keen or malicious observers, especially in

the Pharisees, whom he had exasperated to fury, by laying open their pious wickedness to the people. But he challenged every adversary—Which of you convinceth me of sin? If there be anything in us susceptible of evil influence, Satan will be sure to find it; for he has a bait to suit every disposition—but the Prince of this world came, and had nothing in him. He struck the sparks; but there was no tinder. Events, whether prosperous or painful, are severest trials. If there be mud at the bottom, the waves will cast up mire and dirt—But he was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. He was made under the law; and this law is so spiritual, that the holiest of men, when they have compared themselves with it, have always prayed, Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord; for in thy sight shall no flesh living be justified—But even this law had nothing to complain of in him: it found, in principle and in practice, all the obedience it required. And how was he viewed by him, who is greater than the heart and knoweth all things? He always did the things that pleased the Father.

The fact, therefore, is undeniable. But whence this exception? How came this one man alone to have no sin in him, while, as to the myriads of the human race beside, they are all gone out of the way; there is none righteous, no, not one? It can only be accounted for upon the admission that he was the Lord from heaven; the Holy One of God; the Word made flesh; the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth; who received not the Spirit by measure; in whom dwelt all the fulness of the God-head bodily,

This is not an unimportant decision. The innocence of his character affects the credibility of his mission and his doctrine. A being in whom was no sin could not have been a deceiver: but he constantly declared that he came forth from God; that he came to seek and to save that which was lost; that he would cast out none that came to him.

It serves to evince the nature of his suffering and death. He had no sin of his own; and therefore, if he died not for the sins of others, he died without any reference to sin at all. And where then is the God of judgment? That be far from him, to slay the righteous with the wicked. No one ever suffered under his government absolutely innocent; but either as personally or relatively guilty, bearing his own desert or the desert of others. But in him was no sin: yet he was esteemed stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. And so he was—"But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed."

Without this, he could not have been qualified for his work. He had *immediately* to approach Infinite Purity. His sacrifice would not have been accepted, unless he had offered himself without spot to God. Such an High Priest became us, who was harmless, holy, undefiled, and separate from sinners; and who needed not to suffer for his own sins, dying only for those of others.

What a character is here! Others are lovely; but he is altogether lovely. See what humanity can become—and will become, in all his followers. For they are predestinated to be conformed to him. The

spirits of just men will be made perfect; and though they will be re-embodied, their bodies will have no seed of corruption in them; for they also will be not generated, but produced. They could not have full communion with him, without complete likeness to him—But this we know, that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, *for we shall see him as he is.* “And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.”

## SEPTEMBER 20.—EVENING.

“Master, I have brought unto thee my son.” MARK ix. 17.

THIS is the commencement of a very interesting and instructing narrative. The leading circumstances were these.

The man was in affliction. The affliction was indeed relative; but there are cases in which relative trials are more severely felt than even personal. And what relation is more susceptible of this than the parental? It was a child—an “only” child—possessed by “a dumb spirit,” the distressing and fearful effects of which are thus described: “wheresoever he taketh him, he teareth him: and he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away: and oftentimes it hath cast him into the fire and into the waters to destroy him.” And this had been the case with the unhappy child from his infancy. As nothing is said of his mother, it is probable she was dead, or surely she would have accompanied this application.

But who does not feel for the pitiable condition of the father? And yet who knows what is good for a man in this vain life? But for this calamity perhaps

this suppliant had never known or addressed the Saviour. How often is the valley of Achor the door of hope! How many can say, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted"! How often does trouble send us in search of the Friend of sinners! It is the merciful design of it. It is the effect of it, when sanctified, both in the conversion of the soul, and in renewed applications to the throne of grace all through life. ●

But observe the man's mistake. At first, he goes and applies to the servants instead of the master: but the disciples "could not cast him out." And do not we often err in the same way? Do not our ignorance, carnality, and impatience, lead us to stop at instruments? But they are nothing without God; and the sooner we are convinced of this the better, that we may not weary ourselves for very vanity. "In returning and rest shall ye be saved: in quietness and confidence shall be your strength." What can ministers do for you? If you come looking only to us, you will return as empty as you came. The excellency of the power is of God, and not of us. "Who is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase." The heathens made gods of every thing that afforded them profit or pleasure; and we are paganish in the same way. But we are more criminal than they, because we know God, and know that with him is the fountain of life. And God is jealous of his glory, and is always provoked to destroy or render useless the instrument that robs him of his praise.

Despairing of all other help, the man now comes to Jesus himself—But see with what low apprehensions, and how full of suspicion and fear! “If thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us.” Faith admits of various degrees; and we see it in the views and feelings of those who applied to him in the days of his flesh. How free from hesitation was the Centurion! “Speak but the word,” says he, “and my servant shall be healed.” The leper seemed to question his willingness to act: he “worshipped, saying, Lord, if thou wilt thou canst make me clean.” But this man seems to doubt his power. And we sometimes do the same. We are not indeed always aware of this. We presume that it is only his willingness to help us that we question; but if we fully trusted in his power, how is it that our confidence sinks or wavers, as ordinary means fail, or difficulties multiply? Is any thing too hard for the Lord? Are we ever straitened in him? Yet the Jews, after all the displays of his omnipotence, said, “Can God furnish a table in the wilderness? Behold, he smote the rock, that the waters gushed out, and the streams overflowed; can he give bread also? Can he provide flesh for his people?” And even Moses himself staggered at the promise of God through his unbelief: “The people, among whom I am, are six hundred thousand footmen; and thou hast said, I will give them flesh, that they may eat a whole month. Shall the flocks and the herds be slain for them, to suffice them? or shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them to suffice them? And the Lord said unto Moses, Is the Lord’s hand waxed short? thou shalt see now whether my word shall

come to pass unto thee or not." Let us beware of this evil. Let us bring our faith to the apprehension of his power. Let us believe—that we may see the glory of God.

Our Lord both reproves and encourages him. The reproof was general in the expression; but it was designed to bear upon himself: "He answered him, and said, O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? Bring him unto me." The encouragement was conditional; but it precisely met his case: "If thy son be not recovered, the blame will lie at thy own door; it will be owing to no inability in me, but a want of faith in thyself." Jesus said unto him, "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth." Thus he ascribes a kind of omnipotence to faith. And it is certain that faith can prevail even with God. It can obtain the pardon of all sins. It can make us more than conquerors over all our enemies. It can bring us supplies for all our wants.

But let us observe the effect of our Saviour's declaration on the mind of the poor father. Loving his child, and longing for his deliverance; and knowing that every thing now depended upon his believing, and feeling in himself a sad struggle between faith and unbelief, he straightway cried out, and said with tears, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief."

## SEPTEMBER 21.—MORNING.

"And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief." MARK ix. 24.

We have reviewed the narrative; but we may consider the words now read as the common language of religious experience. For what Christian is there that does not "cry out, and say with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief?" Four things are observable in the speaker.

First. He acknowledges his faith—"Lord, I believe." A man may be conscious of his own grace. Grace brings evidence along with it. It does not operate like a charm; nor are its operations to be classed with those occasional and superficial emotions which give no character to the person, or fixed bias to the disposition. It enlightens the understanding, it renews the heart, and becomes a governing principle in the life. Faith without works is dead. Living faith works by love.—Neither should we be unwilling to *own* what we experience: for the praise does not belong to ourselves; neither will it ever be claimed by any of the real subjects of it. Paul says, "I laboured more abundantly than all the apostles;" yet this was not the language of pride, but praise; for he adds, "Yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." The fault of most is, that they deny their sin; but there are some who deny their grace. If they would do justice to their views and feelings, they must be constrained to *own*, that under all their complaints they have been made to differ from others, and that there is something which they

have received. "If repentance consists in having the heart broken for sin, and from sin,—Lord, I repent. If love to thee is determined by a supreme desire to enjoy thee, and a fear to offend thee,—Lord, thou knowest that I love thee. If faith is self-renunciation, and a reliance upon thyself only for salvation,—Lord, I believe."

Secondly. He confesses the imperfection of his faith—"Help thou *mine unbelief*." A man may be alive and not in full health. A Christian, though renewed in the spirit of his mind, is not free from infirmities. Sin does not reign in his mortal body; but he feels a law in his members warring against the law of his mind, so that he cannot do the things that he would. We read, therefore, of "weak faith:" and our Saviour, addressing his own immediate disciples, said, "Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?" Now, as far as faith is wanting, unbelief prevails.

Thirdly. He speaks of his unbelief with sorrow—"He said *with tears*, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief." It is pleasing to see sensibility in religion; and the Christian has a heart of flesh. His defects are his distresses; he groans under them, being burdened. Even his views of the love of Christ render his failures the more grievous.—He is not only affected with gross and scandalous offences visible to his fellow-creatures, but mourns over evils that are never noticed by natural men: such as dulness in duty, wanderings of thought in devotion, backslidings in heart, and the weakness and wavering of his faith and hope in God.—There is nothing he more deplores than the remains of his unbelief; to these he can no more be reconciled than a conva-

leasant can be reconciled to the remains of an offensive and painful disorder: such a man is thankful for returning health, but he sighs to be entirely well.

Fourthly. He applies to the Saviour for succour—“He cried, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.” In the same way, “the Apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith.” Had this prayer been improper, the receiver ought to have rebuked it; but the man was encouraged. Let us not be afraid, with all the first Christians, and immensely the majority ever since, to call upon his Name. Let us bring all our complaints to him. He is the author and finisher of faith. He has the words of eternal life. He quickeneth whom he will. He alone can relieve us; but in him all fulness dwells. You will make no progress in the Divine life, if you think of advancing without him. Your growth in grace is not the offspring of your own resolutions and exertions, but your being under his agency, and receiving the supply of his Spirit—your living in the Spirit—walking in the Spirit. “Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power: that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and ye in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

## SEPTEMBER 21.—EVENING.

“My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.”

Exod. xxxiii. 14.

THIS exceeding great and precious promise belongs to the Christian, as well as to Moses. What is he authorized to expect from it?

My presence shall go with thee to *guide* thee, and I will give thee rest from *perplexity*. How miserable would a man be, in travelling, if his journey were important, and yet he was ignorant of the way, and every moment liable to err! In this case nothing would relieve him so much as a guide who was willing to go with him, and able to shew him the course he should always take. And his satisfaction would be in proportion to the confidence he reposed in the disposition and capacity of his leader. Nothing can equal the importance of the journey we are taking: life or death, salvation or perdition, depends upon the issue; and “the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.” If left to himself, he will err in every step, and in the greatness of his folly for ever go astray. The Christian feels this, and therefore prays, “Lead me in thy truth, and guide me; for thou art the God of my salvation, on thee do I wait all the day.” And does God disregard his cry? “I am the Lord thy God, which teacheth thee to profit; which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go.” This extends to doctrine; to experience; to all his temporal concerns. He is not indeed to look for miracles: but he is under the conduct of God; and he has given no promise but shall be fulfilled. When the Jews were marching to Canaan, they had a pathless desert to go through: but they were free from all perplexity, because they had a fiery cloudy pillar to regulate all their movements. We have the same. For “this God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death.”

My presence shall go with thee to *guard* thee, and I will give thee rest from *apprehension*. A Chris-

tian has not only a pilgrimage, but a warfare to accomplish. No sooner has he set his face Zion-ward, than he has reason to exclaim, "Many there be which rise up against me; many there be that say of my soul, There is no help for him in God." And what wonder, if, while without are fightings, within are fears? And how is he to prevail over them? He knows that, if left to himself, he must perish, long before he reaches that better country. But he is not alone. There is one at his right hand, who says, "Abide with me; for he that seeketh thy life, seeketh my life; but with me thou shalt be in safeguard." At the sound of this, his mind is relieved, his confidence rises, and he sings, "The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?"

My presence shall go with thee to *provide* for thee, and I will give thee rest from *anxiety*. The manna was not to be hoarded, but gathered daily; and we are to feel our constant dependence upon God for the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. And is this trying? Could we wish it to be otherwise?

"They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength." "My grace is sufficient for thee." What more can we desire? When we have trusted in God for the soul, it might be imagined that it would be easy to trust in him for the body. But temporal things are sensible, and near, and pressing; and some cases would be enough to awaken all their forebodings: but he has said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." "Fear the Lord, ye his saints; for there is no want to them that fear him. The young

lions do lack and suffer hunger; but they that seek the Lord shall want no good thing." Jehovah-jireh! the Lord will provide.

My presence shall go with thee to *comfort* thee, and I will give thee rest from *sorrow*. However you may be stripped, you shall not be destitute of consolation. Though the fig-tree shall not blossom, nor fruit be in the vine, you shall rejoice in the Lord and joy in the God of your salvation. His presence is a substitute for any creature; it can more than repair every loss. Some leave us from want of principle; some from infirmity, rather than depravity. Death abridges our circles. Who can look back over a few years, and not exclaim, "Lover and friend hast thou put far from me, and mine acquaintance into darkness"? Yet if the lamps be extinguished, the sun continues. If the streams fail, we have the fountain. Are the consolations of God small with thee? In the multitude of thy thoughts within thee, do not his comforts delight thy soul?

But oh! when I shall gather up my feet into the bed, and turn my face to the wall—then, all creatures withdrawn—and flesh and heart failing—oh! what can support me in the prospect, and, above all, in the experience of that event? Be of good courage. He who is with thee in the wilderness, will be with thee at the swellings of Jordan, and open a way through the flood, and give thee a dryshod passage over, into the land flowing with milk and honey. He who has been with thee in life, will be still more with thee in death. And therefore you may boldly say with one before you, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou

art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."

From this hour, let me never forget this blessed promise—"My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest." Let me believe it with a faith unfeigned. Let me ascertain my title to it. Let me plead it before the Throne of Grace. Let me apply it in my perplexities, my apprehensions, my anxieties, my sorrows. Let me bind it about my neck, and write it upon the table of my heart—that when I go, it may lead me; when I sleep, it may keep me; and when I awake, it may talk with me. Amen.

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## SEPTEMBER 22.—MORNING.

"Thy Maker is thine husband." Isa. liv. 5.

THE relation in which God stands to us must be all-important. If we are his people, he is related to us not only as the God of nature and providence, but as the God of grace. This spiritual connexion is held forth under various forms; none of which is more common, simple, or well known, than the marriage union.

The marriage union is honourable in all. It is exemplified in the larger part of the human race. It was established in Paradise, where it was not good for man to be alone; and in commendation of it our Saviour wrought his first miracle at a wedding. But applied to God and us, it is a metaphor; and therefore it is to be soberly explained. For while we are not to overlook the wisdom and kindness of the Holy Ghost in meeting our weakness, we are not to press

every circumstance of the comparison into an article of allusion. The relation into which God enters with his people is analogous to that which subsists between the husband and the wife. This could be easily explained and understood.

But let us take the reality of the connexion itself, to shew us three things. First. The condescension and goodness of God. Nothing will bear a comparison with it. Consider what *He* is; his independence, his greatness, his glory. And view *them* in their unworthiness, lowness, vileness. How wonderful that *He* should thus magnify *them*; and set his heart upon them! They had neither birth, nor relations, nor wealth, nor wisdom, to recommend them. It cannot, indeed, be denied that they are distinguished by all these attributes now: but this is the consequence of the relation, and not the cause of it—"Since thou hast been precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee."

Secondly. The privilege of believers. Blessed are the people who are in such a case; yea, happy is the people whose God is the Lord. They have One, in the nearest of all relations to them, who is love itself; and will bear with their infirmities, and in all their afflictions be afflicted; who is infinitely wise, and knows their frame, and will never mistake their welfare; who is almighty, and able to defend them from every danger, and to make all things work together for their good; who is faithfulness and truth, and will never leave them, nor forsake them; who lives for ever, and renders the union eternal and indissolvable.

Thirdly. Their duty. They must mind their husband's concerns. They must regard properly his

relations. They must obey him. The wife promises this in marriage; and the Apostle enjoins it: Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands. He extends it to every thing; but this must be qualified with one condition—every thing reasonable and righteous. Vashti refused Ahasuerus, when he sent for her to come and exhibit herself before a company of intoxicated lords and officers, in violation of all decency, and the laws of veiled concealment in which women then lived; and we justify her disobedience. But with regard to us, the will of God is absolute, not only because he has a propriety in us which one creature can never have in another, but because all his commandments are right. The wife is required to reverence her husband. This must be a hard saying in some cases, seeing there are sometimes so very few materials to excite or deserve veneration.—But this should have been thought of before: and persons should not voluntarily contract relations, the duties of which they cannot perform, and must not neglect. God's excellences are infinite; and it is delightful to give him the glory that is due to his holy Name. The wife, also, must be faithful to her husband: "she is for him, and not for another." And we are only the Lord's. There is such a thing as spiritual adultery: to avoid which we are to keep ourselves from idols. Milton's wife returned home again; but she came back and humbled herself, and was readmitted to favour. Here is the duty of the Church—"Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house; so shall the King greatly desire thy beauty: for he is thy Lord; and worship thou him."

## SEPTEMBER 22.—EVENING.

"Thou, O God, hast prepared of thy goodness for the poor."

PSALM lxxviii. 10.

THE acknowledgment refers to the gracious attention of God to Israel, his pensioners, while they sojourned in the wilderness. They were destitute of all ordinary supplies; but "he commanded the clouds from above and opened the doors of heaven, and rained down manna upon them to eat, and gave them of the corn of heaven. Man did eat angels' food: he sent them meat to the full." We are not to look for miraculous provision; but God has not forsaken the earth, nor forgotten to be gracious. Let us observe the nature of this goodness, and the subjects for whom it is prepared.

The goodness of God appears in the produce of the ground, even for the brute creation. Indeed man is concerned in their support, and a deficiency with regard to them would materially affect his own welfare. But while the Lord cares for oxen, and causes the grass to grow for the cattle, he provides *corn* for the more immediate service of man. This forms, owing to our dependence upon it, what the Scripture calls "*the whole stay and staff of bread.*" Judæa was famous for this noble production. Moses calls it "*a land of wheat.*" By a boldness of metaphor he speaks of "*the kidneys of wheat.*" In the restored prosperity of this highly-favoured people, this commodity is not overlooked: "*They shall flow together to the goodness of the Lord for wheat*"—"The barns shall be full of wheat"—

But let us pass from Judæa to our own country.

This is a land the Lord careth for, and whose inhabitants are “fed with the finest of the wheat.” Who that has lately watched the springing of the earth, seen the valleys standing thick with corn, heard the little hills rejoicing on every side, and shouted as the precious treasure was safely conveyed into the garner, can help exclaiming, “Thou, O God, hast prepared of thy goodness for the poor”? And shall we expose ourselves to the reproach of the prophet, “Neither say they in their heart, Let us now fear the Lord our God, that giveth rain, both the former and the latter, in his season: he reserveth unto us the appointed weeks of the harvest”?

Two things in this case may hinder or weaken the impression of his goodness. The one is, the constancy of its return. It is easy to see that this is really an argument for greater thankfulness, unless we are to be evil because God is good; for surely the commonness of benefits multiplies them, and increases our obligation in a corresponding degree. Yet what is usual ceases to strike; what is frequently repeated, and returns continuously in a fixed and known regularity, arrives without emotion, and is regarded as a thing of course. When the manna first fell upon the ground, every eye would be turned towards heaven; but it soon became “this light food.” And one reason why God sometimes withdraws or suspends an enjoyment is, that we may learn to feel the worth by the want of the blessing.

The other is, the means he employs. These keep us from seeing his hand; yet that hand worketh all in all. Away with the semi-infidelity of philosophers —He has established no mechanical laws which render

his continual presence unnecessary. Instruments are nothing without his agency. If they succeed, it is only because he uses them. Second causes are moved by the first: "I will hear, saith the Lord, I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth; and the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil; and they shall hear Jezreel." David therefore fixes our eye at once upon God; and says, "*Thou visitest the earth, and waterest it; thou greatly enrichest it with the river of God, which is full of water; thou preparest them corn, when thou hast so provided for it. Thou waterest the ridges thereof abundantly; thou settlest the furrows thereof; thou makest it soft with showers; thou blessest the springing thereof. Thou crownest the year with thy goodness; and thy paths drop fatness.*"

Miracles rouse attention for the moment, but the ordinary workings of Divine Providence are no less truly wonderful in themselves: yea, the instant and immediate production of an effect develops less of his perfections than the securing of it by various and numberless combinations, not one failing. We admire the word that multiplied five loaves into a sufficiency to feed a large multitude; but whose operation is it that annually increases the seed that is sown "and dies," thirty, sixty, and an hundred fold? If we have faith enough to see God only in extraordinary events, our godliness will be very occasional and limited. But there are some who live in his presence, who "walk with God," who confess him in every trial and comfort, and are preparing for that heaven where God is "all in all."

If some things would prevent our gratitude, others

are adapted to excite and strengthen it. Let us, if we would be impressed with this goodness, think,—

First, How easily he could have destroyed our hopes. All was suspended upon his will. War might have ravaged and desolated our fields. Insects, blasts, and mildew, were at his call. The heavens over us might have been as brass, and the earth under us as iron, through continued and scorching heat. Excessive rains might have deluged the soil, injured the ripening of the corn, and hindered the in-gathering of the produce.

Secondly, Let us reflect how dreadful the effects of dearth would have proved.—God has favoured us in a thousand instances. He has not only relieved, but indulged us. With how many sounds, and perfumes, and colours, and relishes, has he gratified our senses? But these might have been withholden, without annihilating human support. We never feel in viewing a flower as we do at the sight of an ear of corn. It is when we lean on the stile and see the waving bounty, or when we walk through the pathway of the standing ears; it is then we exclaim, "Thou, O God, hast prepared of thy goodness for the poor." It is not difficult to convince men of the importance of what relates to their bodies. The flesh cries out, and, if denied ease or food, will be heard. Animal appetites often return, and the relief of them is even essential to the preservation of life. What so powerful as the cravings of hunger? We have also relations to be provided for as well as ourselves. Many have families: some have large families. What is it for a mother to hear a child cry for want, and have no sustenance to give it!

Thirdly, We must not forget how much we have

deserved his displeasure. We cannot estimate properly his goodness without considering our unworthiness of the least of all his mercies. Here there is a difference between us and other creatures. The eyes of all wait upon him, and he giveth them their meat in due season. But they have never offended him, they have always fulfilled the end of their being. But we have renounced our allegiance to him, we have followed idols, we have joined in alliance with his foes, and have daily and hourly provoked him to his face—What claim has a rebel upon his gracious sovereign? or a runaway servant, who has robbed him, upon a kind master? Where is the benefactor who would continue his bounties after numberless proofs of ingratitude, and enmity, and insult? Where then should we have been if God had rewarded us according to our iniquities? Our guilt has been aggravated beyond that of any other country, by reason of our pre-eminent advantages. Surely it is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. Surely at the end of another harvest we are constrained to exclaim, “Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us; but to thy Name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake.”

But we are here reminded not only of the nature of his goodness, but the subjects of it: “Thou, O God, hast prepared of thy goodness for the poor.” It is not for them exclusively. “The king is served by the field.” A supply for the poor is of course a supply for the rich; and it is easy to see that a suspension of the Divine goodness would involve all ranks. The rich can no more create than the poor; and should the course of vegetation be stopped by Him who has

power to destroy as well as to produce, what profit would a man have of all the wealth he possessed? Wealth would be nothing if it could not be laid out; and if the time ever came, which the Lord forbid! in which there was neither earring nor harvest, the proprietor, as well as the peasant and the pauper, would perish. But it is spoken in reference to the poor, because,

First, they are the larger mass of mankind; and, whatever pride may think, in the eye of reason, policy, and revelation, by far the most important, useful, and necessary part.

Secondly, they would be more peculiarly affected by deficiency. Dear purchases can be made by the rich, who, as the price of provisions advances, can follow it. But the poor are speedily straitened, and become a prey to scarceness; and every door is shut against them but that of precarious charity.

Thirdly, to encourage those in humble and trying life to depend upon him. What he did formerly he does now. He prepares of his goodness for the poor. He may try you, and require proof of your confidence, before he communicates relief: but "the needy shall not always be forgotten, the expectation of the poor shall not perish for ever." "Trust in the Lord, and do good and dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed." And "a little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked."

Fourthly, to enforce our attention to them from the Divine example. We see how he had his eye upon the poor in the Jewish economy. It is delightful to read the various provisions concerning them in the law of Moses. All the earth spontaneously yielded,

the next year, belonged to the poor. At harvest the owners were not to cut down the corners of their fields; they were to scatter some handfuls behind them for the gleaner; and if they dropped a sheaf, they were not to go back for it. See what is said with regard to their borrowing and pledges: "If thou lend money to any of my people that is poor by thee, thou shalt not be to him as an usurer, neither shalt thou lay upon him usury. If thou at all take thy neighbour's raiment to pledge, thou shalt deliver it unto him by that the sun goeth down: for that is his covering only, it is his raiment for his skin: wherein shall he sleep? and it shall come to pass, when he crieth unto me, that I will hear; for I am gracious." Again: "Ye shall not afflict any widow, or fatherless child. If thou afflict them in any wise, and they cry at all unto me, I will surely hear their cry." Hear James calling men away from the gold ring and gay clothing: "Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him? But ye have despised the poor. Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment-seats?" And, "Behold the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped have entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth." We inveigh not against the distinctions and ranks of life; yea, we would maintain them, and are persuaded the invasions of them are no more advantageous to inferiors than to their superiors. Yet they may be carried to an extreme. Neither would we wish to relax for one

moment the apostolic law, that, “if any man will not work, neither shall he eat.” It was never the design of Providence that the poor should be fed without labour; but if they are willing to labour, and cannot procure a decent and comfortable support for themselves, something must be wrong somewhere in the state of the community; and rulers and subjects should remember the awful admonition: “Behold, is it not of the Lord of hosts that the people shall labour in the very fire, and the people shall weary themselves for very vanity?” “For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, nor will I arise, saith the Lord; I will set him in safety from him that puffeth at him.”

Every season shews his goodness on behalf of the poor. Let us be merciful as our heavenly Father is merciful; and followers of God as dear children. “If the clouds be full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth.” What a responsibility attaches to the affluent! What a disgrace, what a curse will their abundance be without diffusion!

Yes, let us fall in with the designs of God in befriending the necessitous. The poor we have always with us, and their distresses are great. Let us feed the hungry, and clothe the naked, and cheer those who are ready to perish, and cause the widow’s heart to sing for joy; and be so many little images of him who prepares of his goodness for the poor. It will be one of the best ways in which we can shew our gratitude on the present occasion—But let us sing a song of praise to the Author of all good, in the language of David, so beautifully versified by Watts—

“ Good is the Lord, the heavenly King,  
 Who makes the earth his care,  
 Visits the pastures every spring,  
 And bids the grass appear.

“ The clouds, like rivers rais'd on high,  
 Pour out, at thy command,  
 Their watery blessings from the sky,  
 To cheer the thirsty land.

“ The soften'd ridges of the field  
 Permit the corn to spring ;  
 The valleys rich provision yield,  
 And the poor labourers sing.

“ The little hills on every side  
 Rejoice at falling showers ;  
 The meadows, dressed in all their pride,  
 Perfume the air with flowers.

“ The barren clods, refreshed with rain,  
 Promise a joyful crop ;  
 The parched grounds look green again,  
 And raise the reaper's hope.

“ The various months thy goodness crowns ;  
 How bounteous are thy ways !  
 The bleating flocks spread o'er the downs,  
 And shepherds shout thy praise.”

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## SEPTEMBER 23.—MORNING.

“ I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord. And I entreat thee also, true yokesfellow, help those women which laboured with me in the Gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellow-labourers, whose names are in the book of life. Rejoice in the Lord alway ; and again I say, Rejoice.” PHIL. iv. 2-4.

THE Apostle much valued and commended the Philippian converts. He here calls them—his “ breth-

ren :" his "dearly beloved ;" and "longed for ;" his "joy and crown." Many people *distress* and *disgrace* their ministers ; but these yielded Paul both *comfort* and *honour*. He does not, however, deem them above the need of exhortation. Yet, though he might have been bold to enjoin what was convenient, for love's sake he beseeches and entreats. The subject is three-fold.

First. Unanimity and concord. This regards a particular instance of disagreement in the Church. "I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord." Here were two women, obviously of some note, who were at variance. We are not informed whether the ground of difference was civil or religious. Perhaps it was owing to a talebearer : for a talebearer separateth true friends. Perhaps it was a mere trifle in the outset. In our mistakes, prejudices, passions, and infirmities, the enemy of souls always finds materials for exciting dislike and contention. Perhaps they were both to blame. This is commonly the case ; and therefore the Scripture says, forgiving *one another*. The feelings of females are quick ; and their imaginations too often give importance to a real or supposed offence. And two such individuals at variance may draw in others, form parties, and embroil a whole church. When this is the case, their own edification is at an end ; and from others is driven that union of soul which is necessary to give efficacy to social prayer, when we meet together in one place, with one accord, waiting for the promise of the Father. The Apostle, therefore, would not that Euodias and Syntyche should oppose, or keep

shy of each other; but, terminating their difference, keep the peace, and live in love. The Saviour is the Lamb of God; and if we have the mind that was in him, we shall display “the meekness and gentleness of Jesus Christ.” The Holy Ghost descended upon the Head, and enters his followers, as a dove; and

“The Spirit, like a peaceful dove,  
Flies from the realms of noise and strife:  
Why should we vex and grieve his love,  
Who seals our souls to heav’ly life?”

We read in ecclesiastical history of two Christians who had quarrelled in the morning; but in the evening one of them sent a note to the other—“Brother, the sun is going down.” He referred to the Apostle’s words, “Let not the sun go down upon your wrath;” and the hint produced reconciliation. When President Edwards had preached one of his first sermons, after the remarkable outpouring of the Spirit upon his labours, he observed two families, when the congregation had withdrawn, remaining in the church, as if by joint consent. Upon approaching them, he found they had, to that day, been in a state of variance; but owing to the influence they were now under, they could not depart from the house of God till they were reconciled.

Secondly. Mutual assistance. “I entreat thee also, true yokefellow, help those women which laboured with me in the Gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellow-labourers, whose names are in the book of life.” Some have imagined that these women here alluded to were Euodias and Syntyche. If it were so, we should learn that per-

sons who have been betrayed into improper temper and conduct, in a partial instance, may yet have been worthy and useful characters; and they are not to be rejected, but restored, in the Spirit of meekness. But whoever these females were, they had co-operated with Paul and his associates in the ministry—not in public preaching: for this our Apostle had expressly forbidden: but in various offices suited to their sex and condition; by their devotion, and example, and conversation; by their privately instructing the ignorant; by their bringing up children; washing the saints' feet; attending benevolent institutions; ministering to the wants of the Apostles. All who wish to be useful may be employed without violating any of the decorums of life, or quitting their proper stations.

On their behalf Paul addresses his "true yoke-fellow." It is absurd to suppose, this means, as some have thought, Paul's wife. For it seems more than probable that he never was married; and the gender of the adjective here used is masculine. Was it the jailer? He had been one of the Apostle's first converts at Philippi; and had much assisted him in the Gospel. Or was it Epaphroditus? But *he* was not at this time at Philippi. Perhaps it was some one of the bishops or deacons, mentioned in the beginning of the Epistle; with whom Paul had been peculiarly connected in travelling and preaching. Whoever he was, he was to help those females who had been so serviceable to Paul and Clement, and their comrades; by his prayers and consolations, and every kind of attention their personal or lative, temporal or spiritual circumstances would

require. How honourable was it to be thus distinguished and recommended by the Apostle! Who was ever a loser by any thing he did for the cause of the Redeemer? He that watereth shall be watered also. God is not unrighteous to forget their work and labour of love. Wheresoever the Gospel is preached that which these women did shall be told for a memorial of them.

Thirdly. Constant joy—"Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice." Rejoicing is pleasing exercise; but it is not always an easy one. In a vale of tears; in an enemy's country; without fightings; within, fears; pressed down with a sense of unworthiness; burdened with infirmities; wearied with a body of sin and death—what wonder if we often hang our harp on the willows? or, at least, that we cannot always sing the Lord's song?—Yet we are enjoined to rejoice "alway." But how? In what? In whom?—in the world? In creatures? In ourselves? Then would it indeed be impracticable. No—But "in the Lord." And in him there is enough at all times, and in every condition, to encourage and delight us. We are empty; but in him all fulness dwells. In him is all the wisdom, pardon, righteousness, strength, and hope, we need. His grace is sufficient for us—He is an INFINITE RESOURCE.

—Therefore says the Apostle, I have not spoken thoughtlessly; I know what I have said, and why I have said it; I know that the thing is possible. And I know also, that it is proper. Nothing becomes a Christian more than joy; and by nothing can he be more useful. I therefore repeat it—**AND AGAIN I SAY, REJOICE.**

## SEPTEMBER 23.—EVENING.

"And in this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined." ISAIAH xxv. 6.

WE might remark here the Author of the entertainment; and the place where it was to be made; and the richness of the provision. But let us notice only the universality of the design. When men make a feast, they invite only their relations and friends, or their rich neighbours, who can bid them again, and make a recompence. But there is one feast to which are invited the occupiers of the highways and hedges, and the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind. Belshazzar the king made a great feast; but it was to "a thousand of his lords." Ahasuerus made a great feast; but it was "unto all his princes and servants; the power of Persia and Media, the nobles and rulers of the provinces being before him." It is true that at the close of it "the king made a feast unto all the people that were found in Shushan the palace, both unto great and small, seven days in the court of the garden of the king's palace." But how large soever the court of the garden was, it could contain only a few thousand partakers, while millions in his one hundred and twenty-seven provinces were excluded from the festivity. But in this mountain the Lord makes "unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees; of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined."

That he was able to do this, shews his greatness

and all-sufficiency. That he was willing to do this, shews the exceeding riches of his mercy and grace. It serves to distinguish Christianity from Judaism. The provisions of the latter were chiefly confined to one people, and comparatively a very small nation: but here there is no difference between Jew or Greek. Jesus is the Saviour of the world. In his Name shall the Gentiles trust. In Him all the families of the earth shall be blessed.

It displays the unchristianism of monopoly. It is lamentable to think how fond some are of inclusion, and still more, if possible, of exclusion. If God was to sanction the anathemas of his rash and erring creatures, how few would be saved! But though they should call upon him as long and as loud as the worshippers called upon Baal, he will not hear them. And if they were fairly to consult his word, his word would tell them that they knew not what manner of spirit they are of. If they were in a good frame of mind, though they would not wish to sacrifice truth to candour, they would rejoice in the thought that others, *all* others, are invited as well as themselves, and that for all there is enough, and to spare.

This universality should also check despondency. "I feel my need of these blessings, more than of my necessary food, and long, above all things, to partake of them. And, O my soul, what hinders me? If the feast be made for all people, why may not I come, and partake freely? The inviters were ordered to bid as many as they should find, both bad and good, to the marriage. It would therefore be, not humility, but even disobedience, to refuse the command of the king. And this is his command-

ment, that we believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ."

Here, too, is the annihilation of excuse. You will be able hereafter to plead no peculiarity in your circumstances as a reason for your irreligion. You will see at the right hand, persons of the same country, connexions, calling, condition; and of the same nature, weakness, passions, and depravity too, with yourselves. Truth will not allow you to say, I perished because there was no Saviour able or ready to save me; because no redress adequate to my relief was proposed to my hope, and placed within my reach. I sought deliverance, but could not obtain it. He turned away my prayer, and said, you are an exception—the benefit was free for all—but you. No. You will have no cloak for your sin. No alleviation of your misery. This will be the hell of hell—You would not come to him that you might have life. You were soul-suicides. You destroyed yourselves.

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## SEPTEMBER 24.—MORNING.

"He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk even as he walked." 1 JOHN ii. 6.

THE state here spoken of is *abiding* in Christ. A man's *saying* he is thus in him is done two ways. The one is to himself—and so it is belief. The other is to his fellow-creatures—and so it is profession. The rule of such a man's life is the example of Christ—*walking as he walked*. And to this he is under an obligation to conform—He *ought* to walk even as he walked. The obligation is fourfold.

First. He ought to walk even as he walked, from a principle of *evidence*. Deception, in religious concerns, is not only possible, but common; and the consequences, if the delusion continues, will be dreadful. Hence we should be anxious to know whether our hope is any thing better than presumption; or our safety is any thing more than self-security. If from self-confidence we contemn such solicitude, let us remember that the sacred writers command us not to be highminded, but fear; and to examine and prove whether we be in the faith. There are, indeed, many proofs of a gracious state, and there are some of a more experimental nature, to which we do well to take heed: but none of them can afford us relief, if they are unaccompanied by an imitation of Christ.—“Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?” “If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.” “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.”

Secondly. He ought to walk even as he walked, from a principle of *consistency*. The relations and conditions in which we are found determine the propriety of our conduct. When we know what a man is, we conclude what it becomes him to do. A steward is expected to be found faithful; and dishonesty draws upon him censure and condemnation from all. Every one is sensible that a priest and a king should not act like common men; but that a dignified and sacred line of conduct is required by their rank and office. Christians are kings and priests unto God; and therefore they must walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they are called. The man who advances peculiar and superior claims to any thing has no

reason, no right to complain, if he be judged by his pretensions. He who wishes to pass as a Christian avows himself related to Christ; and by his doctrine and character he must be tried: he ranks himself above all the world; and challenges the inquiry, What do ye more than others?

Thirdly. He ought to walk even as he walked, from a principle of *usefulness*. He will thus put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. He will wipe off the reproach attached to the Gospel. He will adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things. He will be the means, by his good works which they behold, of inducing those that are without to enter the way everlasting. No one can imagine the influence and efficiency of a life entirely Christian. It is a blessing to the whole neighbourhood in which it is displayed. It is like a dew from the Lord, and as showers upon the grass. But by an unworthy and unbecoming conduct, a professor of religion can destroy much good. He causes the way of truth to be evil spoken of. He hardens transgressors. He perplexes the weak. He grieves the strong. He opposes and discourages all those who are labouring to win souls. Woe to the world, because of offences! And woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!

Fourthly. He ought to walk even as he walked, from a principle of *gratitude*. We feel and acknowledge the kindnesses shewn us by our fellow-creatures; and in consequence of it we endeavour to meet their wishes, and to avoid whatever pains or displeases them: for actions speak louder than words. What has not Christ done for us? See his condescension, when, in the form of God, he took upon

him the form of a servant. See his grace when he was rich, and for our sakes he became poor. See him in the manger, and in the garden. See him upon the cross dying, and upon the throne reigning, for us. See him making all things work together for our good. And surely we shall feel that a peculiar, a supreme love to him becomes us. And how are we to shew it? Shall we ever grieve his Holy Spirit? Shall we not ask, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? Shall we not pray, "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength and my redeemer"? He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me. He that offereth praise glorifieth me; and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I shew the salvation of God—Upon which Philip Henry observes, Thanksgiving is well, but thanksgiving is better.

If we walk like him now, we shall walk with him hereafter. It is his own promise—"Thou hast a few names even in Sardis, which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white; for they are worthy."

## SEPTEMBER 24.—EVENING.

"Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me." JOHN vi. 45.

MANY perhaps have never particularly observed this expression. But it is very instructive.

It shews us what faith is—It consists in coming to Christ. He is no more in the world, so as to be known after the flesh. This coming to him could

not mean a corporeal approach, without excluding all now living, and all who have lived ever since, from the promise, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest: and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." Yea, when he was on earth, this coming intended much more than a bodily access to him; for he complained of those who were then near him and followed him. "Ye will not come to me that ye might have life;" "ye also have seen me and believed not." But it is a representation of faith by its operation and effect. Faith is not a mere notion of belief, but *such* a belief as is accompanied with an application to him for all the purposes of salvation—Therefore coming to him, and believing on him, are used by himself as synonymous with each other.

It reminds us also of the reasonableness of faith. Faith is not the offspring of presumption or ignorance: it flows from instruction, from Divine teaching—"Every one, therefore, that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me." A fool only would intrust something immensely valuable to a being with whom he was unacquainted. I have ventured, says the Christian, such an interesting, such an infinite treasure in the hands of Christ, that I should be the most miserable of all creatures had I any suspicion concerning him. But I am not ashamed, I cannot be confounded. "I *know* whom I have believed, and am *persuaded* that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day." And every believer is able to give a reason of the hope that is in him. His house is great and weighty, and the fall would involve not only the furniture, but

himself; and many a rain and many a flood will arise, and be sure to try it; but he feels secure, because he is conscious that it is founded on a rock. It is therefore said, "They that know thy Name will put their trust in thee; for thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee."

We see also the entire importance of the Lord Jesus. We cannot infer the value of a thing from the aim of men: they may attach themselves to a trifles, and expend their labour and sacrifices on a thing of nought. But the Lord is a God of knowledge: by him actions are weighed. And if God fixes upon an end, and always keeps it in view; and if, in all he says and does, he seeks the promotion of it; we may be assured that the object is unspeakably excellent and necessary. Now we here see that all the teaching of God, both in the revelation of the word and in the work of his Spirit, is designed to make us feel our need of Christ; and to induce us to desire him, and to repair to him. This is telling us plainly enough that there is salvation in none other; that in him all fulness dwells; that he is all, and in all.

Here is a rule for ministers to go by. If they would conform to the mind and method of God himself—and none teaches like him—every one that hears and learns of them will be guided to Christ, and will hear nothing but the call, "Behold the Lamb of God." This is not the case with all preachers. If we were to hear and learn of some, they would lead us far enough from him: we should be conducted to Epictetus, or Moses, or referred to our poor and wretched selves, for righteousness and strength, in-

stead of being left looking only unto Jesus, and crying—Lord, save, or I perish.

Finally, here is the test by which we may judge of our spiritual state. If we are a people of no understanding, he that made us will not have mercy on us, and he that formed us will shew us no favour. Am I then taught of God? Have I heard and learned of the Father? How shall I answer this question, so essential to my peace and comfort? *How do I stand with regard to Christ?* Have I forsaken the world, and do my thoughts and desires reach out after him? Is it the prevailing concern of my heart to win Christ? to be found in him? to know the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, and to be made conformable to his death—Am I coming to him as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God and precious? This—This is the test—Every one that hath heard and learned of the Father, cometh unto him; and every one that cometh unto him hath heard and learned of the Father.

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## SEPTEMBER 25.—MORNING.

"I would hasten my escape from the windy storm and tempest."

PSALM IV. 8.

SUCH was the language of David—And it may be the language of any other good man, in the depth of distress. But is it allowable and proper? There is no perfection here; and there is nothing concerning which we should indulge more tenderness of censure than hasty expressions, uttered under the pressure of pain or grief. Perhaps it was to prevent

our severity here that the cases of Job and Jeremiah are recorded, both of whom, though eminent in piety, cursed the day of their birth. The Scripture is not harsh upon them; and it is observable, that when James refers to one of these bitterly-complaining sufferers, he only says, "Ye have heard of the patience of Job." They who have never been in a state of peculiar distress, know little of the feelings of human nature under it. But there are others who can respond to the invitation of sympathy; "Pity me, pity me, O ye my friends, for the hand of God hath touched me!" And the Father of mercies knows our frame, and remembers that we are dust. We are not required to choose suffering for its own sake; or to be indifferent to ease and deliverance. Our Saviour himself had not that fortitude which mocks at pain; but that which felt deeply, and yet submitted. With strong cryings and tears he prayed, "Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done."

But what allows of excuse, truth does not require us to commend. It was his infirmity that induced David to long for death, to hasten his escape from the stormy wind and tempest: and an old writer tells us it would have been more honourable for him to have asked for the strength of an ox to bear his trials, than for the wings of a dove to flee from them. Is not such language unworthy and ungrateful? Should we overlook and forget all our comforts? *Have not these been great and numerous?* And did we *then* long to flee away?—Yea, *are* they not many and various even *now*? And shall we only dwell on the dark side? Let us examine again; and let truth and thankfulness stand by. And may they not *yet*

be many and great? Afflictions are not immutable dispensations. What changes often take place, to the surprise as well as joy of desponding sufferers!

“The Lord can change the darkest skies;  
Can give us day for night;  
Make drops of sacred sorrow rise  
To rivers of delight.”

And is there not unbelief in the case? You are afraid of all your sorrows; and not only of their continuance and increase, but of their influence and effects. You dread lest you should not bear them properly, so as to glorify God; but sink in the day of adversity. Yet, O thou of little faith! wherefore dost thou doubt? Is not he *able* to preserve, and support, and comfort thee? And has he not *engaged* to do it? Has he not said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee? “When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.” And has not his conduct always accorded with this assurance; both with regard to others and with regard to thyself?

“Did ever trouble yet befall,  
And he refuse to hear thy call?  
And has he not his promise pass'd,  
That thou shalt overcome at last?”

More than once you have been appalled in the prospect of a trial; but when the evil day came, there came with it mercy and grace to help. Perhaps you even gloried in tribulation. Perhaps you would not

refuse to pass through some of those distressing exercises again, to enjoy the same peace and comfort.

Is there not much ignorance and inconsideration in this impatience? How do you know that it is better to escape from these troubles than to bear them? Not one of them has befallen you by chance. May you not infer the righteousness of them all from their very Author? Is not his work perfect? Are not his ways judgment? He doth all things well. Does he detain you in distress because he does not love you? Yea, he loved you with an everlasting love; and withheld not his own Son from you. You may therefore entirely confide in him, assured that if he does not release you, it is because he waits to be gracious; and also equally assured, that blessed are all they that wait for him; for it is good for a man not only to hope, but quietly *wait* for the salvation of the Lord.

First. Your own welfare may require the process. The Saviour was made perfect through suffering; and the character of every Christian is more formed and improved from his afflictions than his enjoyments. What would some of you have lost, had you fled away before such a trying dispensation enriched your faith and hope! How much of your happiness in heaven will arise from a review of your present conflicts on earth! The very trial of your faith is precious; and the crown of life is promised, not to him that *escapes*, but to him that *endureth* temptation. Afflictions are heavenly agents, and work out for you a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

Secondly. The welfare of others may require it

also. We are detained here to be useful; and we are often most useful in our trials. Nothing strikes like facts. The passive graces are the most impressive. They are better than a thousand sermons; better to arrest the careless, to instruct the ignorant, to encourage the timid, to comfort the desponding. It was well Bunyan did not escape from the prison at Bedford, or we should not have had his Pilgrim's Progress, and his Holy War. Paul was a prisoner, and knew that to depart and be with Christ was far better; nevertheless, because it was more needful for the Philippians, he was willing to abide in the flesh, and acquiesced in the adjournment of his deliverance and bliss. And here *you* also may be wanted. Perhaps you have a venerable mother, and are required to rock the cradle of her age who rocked the cradle of your infancy. Perhaps you are a parent, and a rising family is dependent on your care, instructed by your wisdom, edified by your example. We are all placed in circumstances where we may prove a blessing; and this is our only opportunity. We may glorify God in heaven; but not in the same way as now, by submission, patience, and self-denial. This is an advantage we have above the glorified. They cannot exercise candour, and forgive injuries, and relieve distress, and save souls. Life is ours as well as death. Therefore all the days of our appointed time let us wait, till our change come.

## SEPTEMBER 25.—EVENING.

"And his disciples came, and took up the body, and buried it, and went and told Jesus." MATT. xiv. 12

WHILE you sympathize with them in their loss, and applaud their conduct on the occasion, you are perhaps ready to envy them the privilege they enjoyed. "Ah! happy disciples, to be able to repair to Jesus, and tell *him* your grief." But *you* may do the same. He has said, Lo! I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. And therefore, though he is no longer on earth corporeally, he is here spiritually. Though you cannot see him, you can approach him, and find him a very present help in trouble. Yea, you have the advantage of those who lived in the days of his flesh. He was not then in every place: but

"Where'er we seek him he is found;  
And every place is holy ground."

They often had to go to a distance. Martha and Mary had to call in a servant, and send to him beyond Jordan, saying, "Lord, behold he whom thou lovest is sick." But you can instantly fall upon your knees, and cry, "Lord, I am oppressed, undertake for me;" and prayer will reach him in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye—"Before they call I will answer; and while they call I will hear."

Realize therefore the privilege; and remember that the best thing you can do with your trouble is to take it to him. This is sanctioned by the highest authority: "Is any afflicted? Let him pray."

It is recommended by experience :

“ What various hindrances we meet  
In coming to a mercy seat !  
Yet, who that knows the worth of prayer,  
But wishes to be often there ? ”

Of all the millions that have tried it, there is not one but will say, “ It is good for me to draw nigh to God ; ” and also add, “ Wait on the Lord, be of good courage, and he shall strengthen *thine* heart : wait, I say, on the Lord.”

There is nothing like the influence of the exercise, in calming the ruffled mind, healing the broken spirit, and preserving us from all the unhallowed feelings to which we are liable in the hour of distress.

To whom can we be so encouraged to go as unto him ? Others are often wanting in kindness. Their patience is soon exhausted. By our continual coming we weary them. They may be in a selfish or pettish frame. They may be too busy to attend to our complaint. Our case may be deemed beneath their notice. When they deign to regard us—What airs they give themselves—what difficulties they urge—what delays they require—how they love to make us feel our dependence—and how sure are they to remind us of our faults ! But he upbraideth not. He despises not the prayer of the destitute. He is full of condescension and long-suffering. His heart is the dwelling-place of pity. He presses us to make free with him—“ Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

If men are kind, they are often powerless. If their ear is open to hear, their hand is shortened that

it cannot save. They may weep when we weep, and weep most of all that their resources cannot aid their affections. But nothing is too hard for the Lord. As to the trouble you take to him, he can explain it, and shew you wherefore he contendeth with you. He can support you under it. He can deliver you from it. He can turn it into a blessing. He can enable you to say, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted."

Therefore go and tell Jesus. It is not in all cases and in all respects improper to unbosom yourselves to a fellow-creature, and especially a fellow-Christian; some solace and relief may be obtained: but, says Cowper—

"Were half the breath thus vainly spent,  
To Heaven in supplication sent;  
The cheerful cry would oft'ner be,  
'Hear what the Lord hath done for me.'"

Have you, like these disciples, been to the grave, and left your hope and comfort in the dust? Go and tell him who wept himself at the grave of Lazarus, and who can be better to you than ten sons.

Have you received intelligence that alarms or distresses you? Do as Hezekiah did—He went and spread the letter before the Lord.

Have you a heart's bitterness, known only to yourself, and which you feel not at liberty to divulge to any earthly connexion? There is nothing but you may communicate to him. He enjoins you in *every* thing to make known your requests unto him.

Are you a backslider, and after knowing the evil of sin, and tasting that the Lord is gracious, have you turned again to folly? Have you said, I have loved

idols, and after them will I go? "Oh! turn; turn again." "Take with you words, and turn unto the Lord." You will find him where, and what he was—the change has been only in you—

"Behold, great God, we come to thee,  
Though blushes veil our face;  
Constrain'd our last retreat to seek  
In thy much-injur'd grace."

And, O thou sinner, just awakened to look into thy condition; and, pressed with a sense of thy guilt, and depravity, and danger, art asking, "What must I do?" go thou to him. Wait for nothing to recommend thee—He looks for nothing. Throw thyself at his footstool. Say, "Lord, mine is a pressing case. I must obtain relief, or be undone for ever. Other refuge have I none. In thee is my help—Leave not my soul destitute." And he will not, he cannot reject thee: for he has said—**HIM THAT COMETH UNTO ME, I WILL IN NO WISE CAST OUT.**

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#### SEPTEMBER 26.—MORNING.

"And he brought him to Jesus." JOHN i. 42.

THESE are few words; but they are very instructive and improving. We may ask three questions.

To whom was he brought? "He brought him to Jesus." To whom should he have been brought but unto him? He had the words of eternal life. In vain would he have been brought to the princes of the world; to the philosophers of antiquity; to the moralists of the age; to the Scribes and Pharisees; to Moses; to the Law—Moses wrote of him; and the

Law was a schoolmaster to bring men to Christ, that they might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the deeds of the Law. To him, says Isaiah, shall men come. To him, said the dying Jacob, shall the gathering of the people be. There alone they can find the wisdom they need; the pardon they need; the peace they need; the strength they need. In him they are blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places—Neither is there salvation in any other.

*Who was brought?* It was Simon Peter—"He brought *him* to Jesus." He is a character frequently and largely noticed in the Sacred History. For, in consequence of this introduction, he became not only a disciple of Jesus, but a preacher of the Gospel, and an Apostle; and, from the low occupation of a fisherman, he was made a fisher of men; and by one cast of his net he gained three thousand souls. Let us endeavour to bring men to the Saviour, remembering, that we know not what he will do, not only in them, but for them, and by them. While he saves them, he may also employ and dignify them. However unlikely at present they appear, we may, by-and-by, observe them, with joyful surprise, and adoring gratitude, not only as Christians, but as ministers in his Church; and extensively serving their generation, according to the will of God. *Whatever* condition they may fill, or office they may discharge, they will be, must be, useful. Like their father Abraham, they will be not only blessed, but blessings. In converting one, we do good to many—Who ever went to heaven alone?

We may also ask—*Who brought him?* It was

Andrew—"He brought him to Jesus." Andrew had been for some little time with Jesus himself; and he immediately evinces the influence of the intercourse on his own mind by his concern to bring others to the same Saviour. And there is nothing peculiar in this. They who have seen his glory will be sure to proclaim his worth. They that have tasted that the Lord is gracious themselves will be always constrained to invite others—*O taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him.* And they always speak of him best who speak from experience.

Andrew was not only acquainted with Jesus but he was also related to Peter. *He first findeth his own brother Simon,* and saith unto him—We have found the Messias. The expression intimates that he also prevailed upon others, but that he *began* with him. His finding him *first* might have been accidental; but it is much more probable that it was by design. He thought, and he thought justly, that his own brother had, though not an exclusive, yet a prior, claim to his attention. And therefore, while many lead their friends and relations, their own flesh and blood, into the haunts of dissipation, the counsel of the ungodly, the way of sinners, the seat of the scornful, and so bring them to the devil, Andrew *instantly* performed towards Simon, his own brother, a brother's part—And he brought him to Jesus.

Let us not forget this. We are to disregard none of our fellow-creatures; but surely those who are connected with us by the ties of friendship and of nature have the first right to our solicitude. How is it possible for us to think of them, and not exclaim,

with Esther, in the dread of a more tremendous perdition—How can I bear to see the destruction of my kindred? In endeavouring to do good to these, we have also greater opportunities and advantages, by reason of our influence and easiness of access. Let then grace sanctify and engage in her service all the force and endearment of natural affection. Let the pious sister pray for, and plead with, an irreligious brother. Let the godly wife strive to save her own husband. Let the husband allure to accompany him the desire of his eyes. And oh! let parents awaken and blend their anxieties and efforts to bring to Jesus their children. When Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, all the wounded were to obtain cure by looking. But children were bitten, as well as men and women. Had we been there, we should have seen many a father leading along his little daughter to a place of vision; and many a mother pressing near with her infant son in her arm, and pointing his eyes to catch the shining remedy. So has the Son of man been lifted up, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life. The young need him; and the sooner they are brought to him the better. The sooner will they be prevented from injuring society: the sooner will they enter on a course of usefulness, during which they will scatter a thousand blessings. If we do good to an old man, it is all-important to himself; but then it goes off with him. Whereas the good communicated to a child is not only valuable personally, but relatively. It descends from him, and is spread by him, as he rises up and multiplies in life; and the result of the whole cannot be estimated.

And if we bring them to him, will he reject or

despise them? Let his command determine this—“Feed my lambs.” Let his conduct decide it—“They brought young children to him that he should touch them. And his disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God. And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them.”

Let those that *have* children, and let those that *are* children think of this and be encouraged.

“A flower, when offer'd in the bud,  
Is no vain sacrifice.”

Another flower, thus offered, can never arrive at perfection. It must wither and die. But this flower shall live and blossom as a rose. The Redeemer will put it into his bosom; and the fragrance shall spread through the Church below and the temple above.

#### SEPTEMBER 26.—EVENING.

“He hath given all things into his hand.” JOHN iii. 35.

LOVE is always generous. It delights to heap favours upon its object; and never thinks it has done enough. But what munificence is here! “The Father loveth the Son, and HATH GIVEN ALL THINGS INTO HIS HAND!”

How far does this universality reach? If we compare the assertion with other passages of Scripture, especially with the words of our Saviour after his resurrection, “All power is given unto me in heaven

and in earth;" and with the words of Paul, "He ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things;" we shall see that it cannot be taken too extensively.

It takes in all in nature. To him, as we learn from the application of the Apostle, in his Epistle to the Hebrews, David refers, when he says, "Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet: all sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field; the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas." Accordingly, in the days of his flesh all creatures confessed and obeyed his power. He makes summer and winter. The day is his, the night also is his. The silver and the gold are his, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. The world is his, and the fulness thereof—He is unworthy the name of a Christian who does not acknowledge his rights and agency in all the scenes of creation around him; walk with him in the bounties of the field, and the beauties of the garden; see him in the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys; and hear him in the voice of every bird, and feel him in the breeze of every wind.

It takes in all in providence. All that is devised and carried on in our world is under his rule. The government is upon his shoulder. There is not a being to be found but is either his servant or his slave; who does not obey him voluntarily or by constraint. He doth according to his own will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay his hand. He changes the times and the seasons. He removeth and setteth up

kings. While they deal proudly, he is above them. While they follow their own passions, they fulfil his designs. When they move in the line of his purpose, they are resistless! and when they turn from it, and attempt to go forward, he has a hook for their nose, and a bridle for their jaws. The wrath of man praises him, and the remainder of wrath he restrains —like the owner of the mill, who admits the water as long as the grinding requires, and then drops the hatch and keeps back the rest. In all our temporal concerns he decides our successes or disappointments.

“ If light attends the course I run,  
    ‘Tis he provides those rays;  
And ‘tis his hand that veils my sun,  
    When darkness clouds my days.”

Sickness and health, the changes of life, the time, place, and manner of our death, are all regulated by him who “ careth for us.”

It includes all in grace. The resources of the natural and providential worlds are his, to enable him to accomplish the salvation of the soul. He could not make all things work together for the good of his people, unless they were all put under him, and subjected to his control. But he has power given him over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as the Father hath given him. He is made head over all things to the Church. Hence all his ways towards them are mercy and truth. He is also King in Zion. There everything is committed to his authority. He is the only Lord of conscience. He has the appointment of his own finances. He has given prophets, apostles, pastors,

evangelists, teachers. All the influences of the Spirit are dispensed by him, and from him. Pardon and peace, righteousness and strength, are in him—in him all fulness dwells. Therefore to him shall men come: to him shall the gathering of the people be.

It includes all in glory. At death he comes and receives the souls of his people to himself, that where he is there they may be also. At the last day he raises their bodies, confesses them before his Father and the holy angels, and ushers them into the joy of their Lord. That better world he viewed as his own, even here, and disposed of every thing in it, as the owner and governor. “I appoint unto you,” said he to his disciples, “a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed me.” “This day,” said he to the dying thief, “thou shalt be with me in Paradise.” The righteous Judge, says the Apostle, shall give me the crown of righteousness: and all the rewards bestowed upon the churches in Asia were conferred by him—“The Father hath given all things into his hand.”

Therefore let his adversaries tremble. They may make war with the Lamb; but the Lamb shall overcome them, for he is king of kings, and Lord of lords. Escape is impossible. Resistance is vain—but submission is not.

And therefore, if the Father has given all things into his hand, let us do the same. He is worthy of the surrender, and our interest requires it. Let us give ourselves into his hand; and let us do this three ways, or for three purposes—First, to be saved. Secondly, to be employed. And, thirdly, to be governed by him.

Then we may be joyful in him ; and rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory, exulting in the thought that he who is infinitely dear to us is so exalted, and that he on whom we entirely depend is so mighty. Then we shall have nothing to fear, but every thing to expect. Our welfare is involved in his advancement; and because he lives we shall live also. We are the followers, the friends, the children, the bride, the members of him who is higher than the highest—**HE IS LORD OF ALL.**

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## SEPTEMBER 27.—MORNING.

"And he brought him to Jesus." JOHN i. 42.

WHAT Andrew here did with Simon we are to do with our fellow-creatures—We are to bring them to Jesus.

But can men be brought to him now? Did he not say, I am no more in the world? How happy were they who lived when he was on earth! They could repair to him in every trouble, and tell him every distress. Ye benevolent neighbours! you could carry the paralytic, and place him beneath the very eye of mercy. You anxious father! you could go to him and say, "Sir, come down ere my child die." You Martha and Mary, as soon as Lazarus was afflicted, you could send to him, saying, "Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick." And cannot you, my dear readers, apprise him of your desire, or your grief? Have not you at your disposal a messenger that you can despatch to him in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye? "While they call, I will an-

swer; and when they speak, I will hear " And has he not said, Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world? and wherever two or three are gathered together in my Name, there am I in the midst of you? If these words be true, he is with his ministers and people now. Though no longer visible, he is accessible. We may apprehend him as to his essential presence, by which he fills heaven and earth. We may apprehend him also as to his peculiar presence, by which he is nigh to them that are of a broken heart, and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit. He is to be found in the Scriptures. In his house. At his table. On his throne. In the garden and in the field.

But can we bring souls to him? Not efficiently. This is the work of God only. "No man can come to me except the Father which hath sent me draw him." And the sooner we are convinced of this the better. We shall then make all our attempts in dependence on the agency of his Spirit; and, thus honouring him, he will honour us. But we may do this instrumentally. For God makes use of means; and he employs *men*. And employs them not only to do good to their fellow-creatures temporally, but spiritually; not only to relieve their bodies, but to save their souls. And various and many are the ways in which we may thus bring men to Jesus. We may do it by intercession; for he hears prayer for others, as well as for ourselves. We may do it by the influence of example. Nothing speaks so loud as the silent eloquence of a holy, consistent, and lovely life. By this wives may win their husbands without the word; and servants may adorn the

doctrine of God our Saviour in all things. By this *all* may be useful. All cannot be learned; all cannot be rich; but all may be exemplary. We may do it by instruction. Thus Andrew brought Peter—We have found, says he, the Messias. And thus the woman of Samaria brought her neighbours, saying, Come, see a man that told me all that ever I did: Is not this the Christ? By a word fitly spoken—a letter—an invitation to hear the Gospel—the commendation of a good book—the diffusion of the Bible—the sending forth missionaries—the supporting of ministers, whose office it is to turn men from darkness to light—by all these, and many more, we may be the means of introducing souls to Jesus.

But *why* should we be concerned to bring them? Four things should make us alive to this work. First, To feel a concern for it is an evidence of grace; and an evidence the most decisive. Indeed every other evidence is fallacious without this; and this is always to be found in a real Christian. For, however he may walk in darkness, as to a knowledge of his own interest in divine things, and draw the conclusion that he has no part nor lot in the matter, he never is insensible and indifferent to the success of the Gospel, and the salvation of souls. Secondly. To attempt it is a duty. A duty that cannot be declined without the greatest guilt. A duty arising from the relation in which we stand to our fellow-men, as bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh. A duty enforced by the will of God, clearly made known in the injunction, As we have opportunity, let us do good unto all men: and what good can equal this? Thirdly. To accomplish it is the most glorious enterprise. What

is the rescue of a whole nation from civil bondage compared with the deliverance of one soul from the power of darkness, and translating it into the kingdom of God's dear Son? Can a trifle throw heaven into ecstasy? Yet there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth. The work, therefore, is its own motive; its success is its own recompence. And so the Apostle deemed it—“If a man err from the truth, and one convert him, let him know that he which converteth a sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.” Fourthly. To fail in it is no disgrace. Yea, failure here is infinitely more honourable than success in any other enterprise. But wise and good efforts are never in vain. If they are useless as to the direct object, they do good collaterally. If they relieve not the beneficiary, they bless the benefactor. His prayers and endeavours return not void into his own bosom. We are a sweet savour of Christ, not only in them that are saved, but in them also that perish. The promise is not made to success—for *this* does not belong to us; but to exertion—“Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.”

But while we endeavour to bring others to Jesus, let us see to it that we have come to him ourselves. It is awful to think of being the instruments of h<sup>i</sup> grace, while we are not the subjects—

“Great King of grace! my heart sub<sup>ue</sup>; I would be led in triumph too: A willing captive to my Lord; And sing the victories of his word.”

## SEPTEMBER 27.—EVENING.

"We would not be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life." 2 COR. v. 4.

HERE we see that it was not death they desired, but the result of it. They wish to resemble those who will be found alive at the last day, who will not sleep, but be changed; or to be privileged like Enoch and Elias, who went to heaven without dissolution, and were glorified soul and body together. They longed to be clothed, without being found naked—to be clothed upon—that this corruptible might put on incorruption, and this mortal immortality—that their mortality, instead of being lodged in the grave and devoured of worms, might be swallowed up of life; as the rivulet is swallowed up of the river, and the outline is swallowed up of the finished picture, and the dawn is swallowed up of the day, and the child of the man. That is, they wished, if it were possible and allowable, to reach their completeness gently and insensibly, without such a disruption and tearing to pieces as death. Three things may be remarked from hence.

First. The primitive Christians were not, as we sometimes imagine, peculiar beings, and strangers to many of our feelings. They were men of like passions with us, and encompassed with infirmities. They had nature in them as well as grace. They were holy, but human: spiritual, but not divine.

Secondly. A dislike of death is no proof of the want of religion. The forerunners and the accompaniments, "the pains, the groans, the dying strife," may

sometimes deeply affect a pious mind. No man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it. No creature can like its own dissolution. We see this in the animals: though they have no dread of futurity, they yet struggle for life. The fear of death is as naturally inherent in us as hunger, thirst, and sleep; and only requires to be governed. Adam had it in the state of innocence; otherwise the words, "in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die," would have been no threatening. Our Saviour, though his humanity was sinless, feared it, and prayed to him who was able to save him from death with strong cryings and tears, Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not my will but thine be done. We may covet a thing, and not like the mode in which it is to be obtained. The husband and the father longs to see and embrace his family on the American shore, yet shrinks back at the thought of the Atlantic which he has to cross. A man is confined with a diseased member, and his recovery depends upon the removal of it: now what he longs for is not the amputation, but the cure; and no one questions whether he wishes to be well because he shudders at the operation.

Yet, thirdly, since dying is the way, and the only way, to life everlasting, we should endeavour to rise as much as possible above the dread of it. And faith can accomplish what is impossible to flesh and blood. Let us view the subject under all the softenings given it in the Scriptures. Let us remember that Jesus has taken away the sting of death, though the stroke remains; and that the stroke itself will not only be harmless, but beneficial, infinitely beneficial—*To die is gain.*

Keep your eye not on what lies immediately before you, but on the glory and blessedness beyond. If the passage be trying, it opens into a wealthy place—and it is short and safe—and you will not be alone in it. He has said, “I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.” Therefore thank God and take courage, and sing—

“ While he affords *his* aid,  
I cannot yield to fear ;  
Though I should walk through death’s dark shade,  
My Shepherd’s with me *there*.”

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## SEPTEMBER 28.—MORNING.

“The precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold, how are they esteemed as earthen pitchers, the work of the hands of the potter!”

LAM. iv. 2.

SUCH is the difference between the judgment of God, and the spirit of the world, concerning the precious sons of Zion. In the estimation of God, (and his judgment is always according to truth,) they are comparable to gold, yea, fine gold. And they are so for their rareness, and their purity, and their value, and their durability, and for their bearing the severest probation; and, instead of being injured by the trial, deriving improvement, and lustre, and usefulness, from it.

But as that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God, so that which is approved and commended of God, is undervalued and despised by men. The world therefore knoweth them not. It knew *him* not. Their Lord and Saviour was

despised and rejected by them. And they, as his followers, are esteemed as earthen pitchers, the work of the hands of the potter. Natural men judge only from sense and outward appearances; and Christians are often poor and afflicted. They see the outside of the tabernacle: and this is covered with goats' skins and badgers' skins, dyed red; but they never enter the holy place, nor approach Him who sitteth between the cherubims. They are sensual, not having the Spirit; and spiritual things are spiritually discerned. They do not feel their need of the blessings which constitute the happiness and glory of the children of God; and, therefore, prize not the possessors of them. Yea, the carnal mind is enmity against God; and causes them to dislike every thing that bears his impression and likeness.

Yet even these despisers shall behold, and wonder, and perish. When the delusions of time shall give place to the unveiled realities of eternity, they will be compelled to exclaim, *We fools counted their lives madness, and their end to be without honour.* How are they numbered with the saints, and their lot is among the children of God! Yea, even now there are moments, when, if we could witness the workings of conviction, we should hear many a Balaam admiring, and praying, *How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob! and thy tabernacles, O Israel!* Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!

Christians should not be uneasy and impatient under the mistakes and reproaches of their adversaries. It is a light thing to be judged of man's judgment. He that judgeth them is the Lord.

Their praise is not of man, but of God. They should know that this is not their day. Their day is coming. It will be the manifestation of the sons of God. Yea, conscious of what, by the grace of God, they are, they should learn, in whatsoever state they are, therewith to be content. In every thing they should give thanks. Their souls should make their boast in the Lord. They should never scruple to extol and recommend their privileges and excellences. That which we have heard and seen, says the Apostle John, declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us. And is this desirable? And truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.

Who is on the Lord's side? O my soul! art thou? Dost thou love and admire those whom God approves and honours? Canst thou call the saints that are in the earth, The excellent? and say, In them is all my delight? Moses chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; and esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt.

## SEPTEMBER 28.—EVENING.

"To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and PRECIOUS." 1 PETER ii. 4.

EVERY attentive observer must be led to acknowledge the truth of Isaiah's words concerning the Messiah, "He is despised and rejected of men." When we look around us, we find the multitude rising early, and sitting up late, and eating the bread of sorrow, but not seeking after Jesus: rejoicing in the

work of their own hands, but not glorifying in the Lord. This is a fact peculiarly painful to Christians, who, ever since the eyes of their understanding were opened, have been praying, "Let the whole earth be filled with his glory." But let them remember, that he is not universally undervalued. There are some who know his name: yea, they have many and distinguished associates in their estimation of him.

They can claim God the judge of all—To him he is precious. "This is my beloved Son," says He, "in whom I am well pleased." "Behold my servant whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth." Do we need proof of this? "The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hands." He forgives us "for Christ's sake;" and assures us that whatsoever we ask "in his name" we shall receive.

They can claim the innumerable company of angels. Though these glorious beings have not been redeemed by him, they know that he is their Maker and Preserver: and they know that he is the Saviour of their younger brethren. He was seen of angels as his attendants and admirers in the days of his flesh. They rejoice because there is an accession to his subjects, over every sinner that repenteth. The sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow, are the things into which they desire to look. And what is the burden of their songs? "I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying, with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and

wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing."

They claim all the partakers of Divine grace. In whatever age and country they live, and whatever distinctions prevail among them, there is no difference here. Here they are of one heart and of one soul—For to them that believe he is precious.

In what degree? This neither the tongue of men nor of angels can express. But two things we may affirm. He is *universally* precious. There are some who may be termed Christ-dividers. They would be made the partakers of Christ, but partially. They like his cross, but not his sceptre; his sacrifice, but not his service. A real believer, when he, so to speak, examines Christ all over, acquiesces and delights in the whole of him. He is precious, says he, in his person, precious in his characters, precious in his relations, precious in his offices, precious in his life, precious in his death, precious in his doctrine, precious in his promises, precious in his commands—"Yea, he is *altogether* lovely." And he is *supremely* precious. Indeed we do not love him sincerely, unless we love him above all. No other regard becomes his claims. He is the king and the husband of his church; and majesty and marriage allow of no competition of right, or rivalry of attachment. Children are dear, health is dear, life is dear; but they are not to be compared with him. There is no one whose authority I revere, there is no one whose frown I dread, or whose presence, I long for, like his. Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee—

“All my capacious powers can wish,  
In thee most richly meet;  
Nor to mine eyes is light so dear,  
Nor friendship half so sweet.”

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## SEPTEMBER 29.—MORNING.

“Arise ye, and depart; for this is not your rest.” MICAH ii. 10.

ONE of the old Divines, in his pastoral admonitions to his people, exhorts them—not to look for that in the Law, which can only be found in the Gospel—not to look for that in themselves, which is only to be found in Christ—not to look for that in the creature which is only to be found in the Creator—and not to look for that on earth, which is only to be found in heaven.

The present is not our rest. It was not *designed* to be our rest. It is not *fit* to be our rest. And if we are Christians, we have *relinquished* it as our rest, and have chosen another.

Yet who does not need this exhortation? Our souls naturally cleave unto the dust. Many, like Reuben and Gad, prefer an inheritance on this side Jordan. And even the godly themselves, who have not their portion in this life; but have said, As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness, I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness; even these need to have their pure minds stirred up by way of remembrance. “My people,” says God, “have forgotten their resting-place.”

He, therefore, who takes pleasure in the prosperity of his servants, sends them this message, “Arise ye,

and depart; for this is not your rest." And there are five messengers by which he sends it.

The first, is his word. And we should read and hear it for this very purpose. It meets us in our complaint and inquiry, "Who will show us any good?" and says, "Acquaint now thyself with *Him*, and be at peace; thereby good shall come unto thee." It forbids us to lay up treasures on earth. It commands us to seek those things that are above. It denounces the curse and misery of making flesh our arm. It proclaims the grandeur of the soul; and sets before us what alone is worthy of its ardour. It leads us into all truth; and places us at the foot of the Cross, by which the world is crucified unto us, and we unto the world.

The second, is affliction. God speaks by the rod, as well as by the word. While he chastens us with his hand, he teaches us out of his law. Has he not, by events, plainly addressed us, "Ye have dwelt long enough in this mountain; turn ye, and take your journey"? Has he not, by repeated frustrations of our hope, plainly said to us, "Let it suffice thee: speak no more to me of this matter"? Perhaps our purposes have been broken off, even the thoughts of our hearts. Perhaps we have been made to possess months of vanity by sickness. Perhaps by death lover and friend has been removed far from us. And, amidst the wreck of every thing dear to us, a voice, though we knew not at first that it came from Heaven, said, "What hast thou here? and what dost thou here?"—And if we are so much attached to the world, with all our losses and distresses, what should we have been without them? If the pilgrim bo

ever seduced from his way, it is by flowers and prospects; if ever he sits down and sings himself asleep, it is in a pleasant scene, and in fine weather, not when the sky is dark and stormy, and the road is rough and miry; for then, by contrast, the thought of home becomes dearer; and he feels an incitement to quicken his pace.

The third, is worldly success. This, in some respects, may convince us more of the insufficiency and emptiness of every thing here, than even our deprivations. When a man is unable to attain his object, he may still imagine that there *is* happiness in what he misses; and that he is miserable because he misses it. But when he has gained the prize, he is convinced that the dissatisfaction he feels arises from the nature of the thing itself. We long for certain acquisitions, with all the fondness of hope; and feel no apprehension, unless on the side of failure. We cannot believe, from the acknowledgments of others, that these things will belie expectation, and still leave a void within; but only when we have made the trial ourselves; when we have formed the connexion, filled the office, gained the fortune, we desired—and, in the midst of our sufficiency, we are in straits; sigh over our indulgences themselves; and enjoyment, as well as affliction, cries, All is vanity and vexation of spirit.

The fourth is the earnest and foretastes of a better world. And such Christians are favoured with in the comforts of the Holy Ghost; in accesses to the Throne of Grace; in the power and glory of God, which they see in the Sanctuary; and in those sacred moments of divine communion, alone, when they can say,

"While such a scene of sacred joys  
Our raptur'd eyes and souls employs,  
Here we could sit and gaze away  
A long and everlasting day."—

And these not only call, but allure and win the heart away. When the clusters of grapes were brought to the Israel of God in the wilderness, they said, in very intelligible language—What does your present condition supply like this?—See what grows in the land that is before you. Taste; and go up and possess it.

The last, is death. Every apprehension and approach of this cries,—“It is high time to awake out of sleep; for now is your salvation nearer than when you believed.” But this orders us to depart really, as well as morally. God sends, by it, not only *to* his people, but *for* them. And it seems surprising that they should ever be ready to turn away from the messenger. A child at school welcomes every messenger from home *to* him; but he desires most the messenger that comes *for* him. Joseph sends to Jacob, and for him, at once; and his father not only heard his words, but saw his waggons—“Oh! these are really to carry me to him—I shall soon see my son—and die in peace.”

Such a messenger, Christian, is death to you. Come, says God; you have toiled long enough—You have feared long enough—You have groaned long enough—Your warfare is accomplished—Enter the rest which the Lord your God giveth you—Come, for all things are now ready.

Yes; you will soon hear the voice saying—O Israel! you must this day go over Jordan. And why

should you be unwilling to exchange the desert for the land flowing with milk and honey? Is not this the purpose of your travels? The end of your desires? The completion of your hopes?

"But the swelling river rolls between." Fear not. The ark of the covenant will go before you, and divide the waves: and you shall pass over dry-shod. And then let the streams re-unite, and continue to flow on—you will not wish them to re-open for your return. What is misery to others, is joy to you—"I shall go the way whence I shall not return."

## SEPTEMBER 29.—EVENING.

"Let mine outcasts dwell with thee, Moab; be thou a covert to them from the face of the spoiler; for the extortioner is at an end, the spoiler ceaseth, the oppressors are consumed out of the land." ISAIAH xvi. 4.

THE Assyrians were going to invade Judea; in consequence of which some of the people would flee for shelter to Moab, a neighbouring country. In the words we have read, God bespeaks protection on their behalf during their exile; and intimates that their distress would be only short, owing to the destruction of the destroyer. There are several things here noticeable and instructive.

We see that Israelites may be "outcasts." They are not outcasts from God, for he does not cast away his people whom he foreknew. Fear may indeed lead them to say, "I am cast out of his sight;" and to ask, "Will the Lord cast off for ever, and will he be favourable no more?" But this is their infirmity. What says the promise? "Lo, I will command, and I will sift the house of Israel among all nations

like as corn is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth." But they may be outcasts with regard to others. Outcasts by national distress; for in this respect all things come alike to all. Thus it was with the good Shunamite, whose son had been restored to life: Elijah said, "Arise, and go, thou and thine household, and ~~sojourn~~ wheresoever thou canst sojourn: for the Lord hath called for a famine; and it shall also come upon the land seven years." So in the time of the Judges the same calamity prevailed; and "a certain man of Bethlehem-judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he, and his wife, and his two sons." The want of employment also, as well as of provision, may compel to such a step. We have no pity on idlers: they that will not work should not eat: but it is hard to be willing to work, and be able to get nothing to do. A native country is dear, and a trifling cause will not, and *should* not induce us to leave it. Duty says, "Dwell in the land" as long as hope says, "Verily, thou shalt be fed:" but necessity has no law. Outcasts by the violence of persecution. Thus when the poor man, born blind, confessed the Saviour, and recommended his Benefactor, the Pharisees, it is said, "cast him out;" they drove him from the assembly and excommunicated him. At the time of Stephen's death "there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judæa and Samaria, except the Apostles." But these, though spared for the time, were also soon dispersed. How many outcasts were there from France upon the infamous revocation of the

Edict of Nantes! And how many, before the rights of conscience were acknowledged, left this country, and fled to America, carrying liberty and religion with them! And though now persecution is entirely unsanctioned not only by our constitution, but by our government, and no man can be made legally afraid, even when he calls his neighbour under his vine and under his fig tree; yet hardships are still endured by individuals from the carnal mind, that is enmity against God: and we have known wives that have been abandoned; children that have been disinherited; tradesmen that have been deserted; servants, mechanics, and tenants, that have been dismissed from their places, employment, and farms, because they adhered to their religious convictions. Outcasts by reproach. Where the person is not injured, and individuals are not deprived of their liberty or substance, the name may be cast out as evil. They may be viewed as hypocrites, as enthusiasts, as deranged, as melancholy, and be excluded from parties and circles as unworthy of their company, and fit only for scorn or pity. "Hear the word of the Lord, ye that tremble at his word; Your brethren that hated you, that cast you out for my Name's sake, said, Let the Lord be glorified: but he shall appear to your joy." For he that gathereth the outcasts of Israel—

Is not ashamed to own them as *his*—"My outcasts." Instead of despising them, he is the more ready to confess them when they suffer for his sake, or peculiarly need his favour. And though they may be poor, afflicted, and contemned, yet under every outward disadvantage they are more excellent than their neighbours, and he deems them his pecu-

liar treasure. "When there were but a few men in number; yea, very few, and strangers in it: when they went from one nation to another, from one kingdom to another people; he suffered no man to do them wrong: yea, he reproved kings for their sakes; saying, Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm." When they were brick-makers in Egypt, he "gave Egypt for their ransom." When they were captives in Babylon, he gave "Ethiopia and Seba for them." "Since," says he, "thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee: therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life." But read the language of the Apostle—"They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; they wandered in deserts and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth"—Yet, adds he, "of whom the world was not worthy."

He can raise up for them friends even among strangers and enemies. The Moabites were old, and had been often very cruel foes to Israel—yet says God, "Let mine outcasts dwell with thee, Moab; and be thou a covert to them from the face of the spoiler." The people of the world ought to be kind to the people of God, for they owe much to them; they derive many exemptions and many advantages from their influence and prayers. But the world knoweth them not; and from their principles and dispositions we could look only for hatred and opposition. And yet "the earth helped the woman." The servants of God have often been succoured by

persons as unlikely to serve them as the ravens were to bring Elijah food in the morning and in the evening. When you wish to carry a measure with your fellow-creatures, put the case into the hands of the Lord of all. Never limit his power or his goodness. He has not only all events, but all hearts, under his control; and he turneth them like rivers of water. The grand thing is, to approve ourselves unto him: for when a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him. This Jacob found, after prayer, in meeting Esau. Nehemiah prayed to the God of heaven, and the heathen monarch was induced to favour his wish on the behalf of his country. And at the three annual festivals of the Jews, when all the males were drawn to Jerusalem, and invasion seemed easy and inviting, he suffered none of the surrounding nations even to desire their border.

Finally, It is not long the Lord's sufferers will need assistance or protection. This was the case here; and we know how it was accomplished. The danger was great; the enemy had taken all the strongholds of Judah, and had encamped against Jerusalem itself. But there he was arrested and destroyed. This God foresaw, for he had purposed and promised it; and therefore he speaks of it as done already: "For the extortioner is at an end, the spoiler ceaseth, the oppressors are consumed out of the land." The same may be said of all those that distress or alarm the Christian. He may be delivered from many of his difficulties and afflictions before death. But it is only during life he can want or suffer. How short therefore the season of trial!

And much of this is gone already. Every day and hour your salvation is nearer than when you believed. A few more sighs, and all sorrow and sighing shall cease. A few more tears, and all tears shall be wiped from your eyes. Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning; a morning obscured by no cloud, and followed by no night. Yea, faith in the sure word of promise, realizing not only the nearness, but the certainty, considers the salvation as accomplished—"It is done." "Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee. For thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling."

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## SEPTEMBER 30.—MORNING.

"If then I be a father, where is mine honour?"

MAL. 1. 6.

We admire the Scripture mode of allusion and comparison. Its images are taken from the most obvious and simple things: and while they illustrate the spiritual subjects to which they are applied, they also impart moral lessons. While they enjoin the duties we owe to God, they remind us of those we owe to our fellow-creatures. Thus the child is instructed and reproved, by the address which informs and admonishes the Christian.

In the words before us, here is, first, a principle supposed—Indeed it is expressed in the foregoing sentence: "A son honoureth his father." It is a dictate of nature, of custom, of observance in all ages

and countries. The child, as soon as he can reason, finds himself under the control of a superior, at once dear and venerable; to whom he is obliged, and on whom he is dependent: he asks of him information; he looks to him for provision; he confides in his care and wisdom; he obeys his orders, and submits to his discipline. If stricken, he does not reproach, or think of striking again. "The eye," says Solomon, "that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pluck it out, and the young eagles shall eat it." A modern writer has made free to turn these words into ridicule, by ranking them with those senseless bugbears by which nurses often terrify children. But if the ignorance of infidels, with regard to every thing Scriptural, was not extreme he might have known, that, under the Jewish law, filial disobedience was a capital offence. "Every one that curseth his father or his mother shall be surely put to death: he hath cursed his father or his mother; his blood shall be upon him." And Moses mentions also the mode. "If a man have a stubborn and rebellious son, which will not obey the voice of his father, or the voice of his mother, and that, when they have chastened him, will not hearken unto them: then shall his father and his mother lay hold on him and bring him out unto the elders of his city, and unto the gate of his place; and they shall say unto the elders of his city, This our son is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton, and a drunkard. And all the men of his city shall stone him with stones, that he die: so shalt thou put evil away from among you; and all Israel shall hear and fear." Hence, what is threatened, might have been literally

accomplished. But when we consider how figuratively the Easterns expressed themselves, we may admit the reality of an awful penalty on the transgressor without pleading for the literal execution. We have a remarkable instance of filial honour in the regard the Rechabites paid to the authority of their father. "They said, we will drink no wine: for Jonadab the son of Rechab our father commanded us, saying, Ye shall drink no wine, neither ye, nor your sons for ever: neither shall ye build house, nor sow seed, nor plant vineyard, nor have any: but all your days ye shall dwell in tents; that ye may live many days in the land where ye be strangers. Thus have we obeyed the voice of Jonadab the son of Rechab our father in all that he hath charged us, to drink no wine all our days, we, our wives, our sons, nor our daughters; nor to build houses for us to dwell in: neither have we vineyard, nor field, nor seed: but we have dwelt in tents, and have obeyed, and done according to all that Jonadab our father commanded us." It is lamentable to think how little of this obedience is to be found in children now. Yet there is far less piety in the world, than morality.

Here is, secondly, an obligation inferred—It is, that if other fathers are to be honoured, we are much more bound to honour God. For he is a Father far above the truth of the relation in all other cases. We have had fathers; but they were fathers of our flesh—but he is the Father of our spirits. They were fathers only subordinately; and neither the sex, nor the form, nor the talents of the child resulted from their choice: but he is supremely, effi-

ciently, absolutely our Father—he made us—and endued us with all our powers—and from him must spring all our hopes.

And, therefore, not only is the reality of the relation found in him, but the perfection too. He always acts the part of—a wise and good Father—and always acts it completely—divinely. Other fathers often chastise their children for their own pleasure; but he for our profit. They may be implacable; but he is ready to forgive. They may neglect to educate or provide; but he teaches us to profit, and suffers us to want no good thing.

The duty also is enforced by the eminence of his character, and the grandeur of his condition. His understanding is infinite. His power is almighty. His dominion is everlasting. He is Lord of all. “It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in; that bringeth the princes to nothing: he maketh the judges of the earth as vanity.” To this consideration he himself appeals, in the close of this chapter. “Cursed be the deceiver, which hath in his flock a male, and voweth, and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing: for I am a great King, saith the Lord of hosts, and my Name is dreadful among the heathen.”

Thirdly. Here is a complaint alleged. “If I am a Father, where is mine honour?” And has he no ground for this inquiry? Men often complain without cause. They are unreasonable in their demands and expectations. They may be mistaken with regard to the nature and design of many actions, be-

cause they judge after outward appearance. But God's claims are unlimited. He sees motives. He looketh to the heart. He takes our meaning. And, passing by our mistakes and infirmities, accepts and commends our aims and endeavours. And yet even he complains. And how deeply deserved! and how extensively applicable is the charge he brings! See the generality of mankind—Have they any concern to please him? Take the professors of his religion—What do they more than others? Take even the subjects of his grace—even in them, Where is his honour? Is it here? in constantly asking, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? Is it here? in meekly submitting to his rebukes? Is it here? in speaking well of his Name, and recommending him to others?

Let us make the deficiencies and sins of others a mirror in which to behold our own. Do I meet with ingratitude in a fellow-creature that I have relieved? Let it soften my resentment, and keep me from resolving to do no more for him. Let me inquire how I have behaved towards my heavenly Benefactor. Do I reflect on an undutiful child, and perhaps justly too? Yet let me ask whether my heavenly Father has not much more reason to condemn me—If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquity, O Lord, who should stand!

How necessary is it for us to fall down at his footstool; and pray, Enter not into judgement with thy servant, O Lord; for in thy sight shall no flesh living be justified!

What a blessing is the Gospel, that assures us, with the Lord there is mercy, and that his grace is sufficient for us!

Yet let this make us the more concerned to honour him—and to be harmless and blameless—the children of God without rebuke!

## SEPTEMBER 30.—EVENING.

"Seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses."—HEB. xii. 1.

—We should be encouraged to go on in our Christian course, or, as the Apostle expresses it, "lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us. Let us notice the fact, and see how it bears as an argument. Some suppose that Paul here refers to spectators, rather than examples. Persons in running a race had many gazing on them, and the presence of the loookers-on, as well as the prize itself, served to animate them. From hence, if successless, they were mortified as well as disappointed; if crowned, they were not only rewarded, but applauded. It is a solemn truth, that we are never unseen in religion. Many eyes are upon us; and we should pray to be led in a plain path, because, as the margin reads it, of our observers. The world and the church, our fellow-Christians and our ministers behold us; we are a spectacle to angels as well as to men; we are seen by the Judge of all. But though this be a truth, we are persuaded the Apostle alludes not to spectators, but examples. He refers to the characters he had recorded in the preceding chapter, commencing with pious Abel, and reaching down to the close of the Maccabean period of the Commonwealth of Israel.

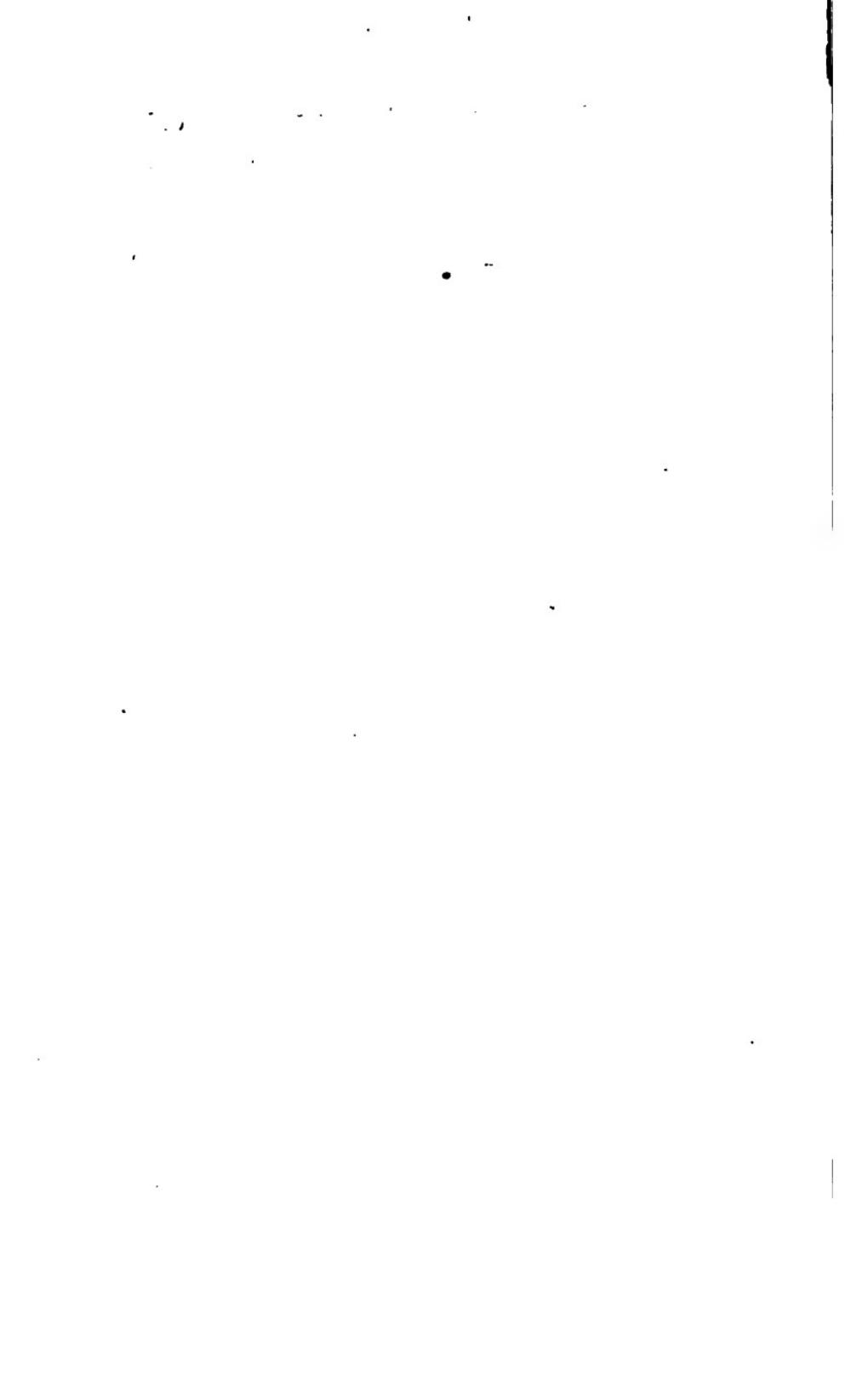
These, he says, "encompass us about." Their

bodies were long ago laid in the grave, while their spirits returned to God who gave them; and in this state it is commonly, perhaps justly supposed, that they have no intercourse with the affairs of this lower world: Abraham is ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledges us not. But, rescued from oblivion, their names, words, and deeds, are found in the Scriptures; and, by perusing these writings, we bring them around us from every quarter; they strike us in every direction. We seem to see them looking anxiously on us, and seem to hear them saying, "We were once in the same state with you, and you will soon be in the same glory with us. Wherefore, gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

He remarks their number—"a cloud," "a great cloud of witnesses." They were few, compared with their contemporaries of the same age; but, collectively considered, they were a multitude which no man could number. In the most degenerate period, the Lord had a people for his Name; and they often exceeded the estimation of hope. When Elijah supposed he was the only true worshipper in the land, the Lord had reserved unto himself seven thousand men who had not bowed the knee to the image of Baal, and whose lips had not kissed him. But if the aggregate was great when Paul wrote this Epistle, what has it become since? And what is it now? How many millions have been added since to the general assembly and church of the first-born!—In whose fellowship we reckon up not a few of our own connexions, with whom we have taken

sweet counsel together, and gone to the house of God in company!

He gives this number a name—They are a great cloud of “witnesses”—This name God gives to all his people: “ye are my witnesses.” According to the Apostle, these glorified beings *testified* to the nature of faith, and proved it to be “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” They testified to the truth and the cause of God; and they testified by their lips and lives, and especially by their sufferings. They attested from experience that religion was a practicable thing, for they exemplified it, though they had been men of the same nature, passions, and infirmities with others. They shewed also, from their own experience, that religion was not an unprofitable thing; they never served him in vain; but were always more than indemnified for every sacrifice they made. They all found it good to draw near to God. He was always better to them than their fears. He not only delivered, but indulged them. They were troubled on every side, yet not distressed. They trod on briers and thorns, but their shoes were iron and brass. They had arduous services and trials; but as their days, so was their strength. They always complained of themselves, but never of their Lord and Saviour—They spake well of his Name, and have left this confirmed, this inviting testimony behind them; “O taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him.” Lo this, we have searched it, so it is; hear it, and know thou it for thy good.



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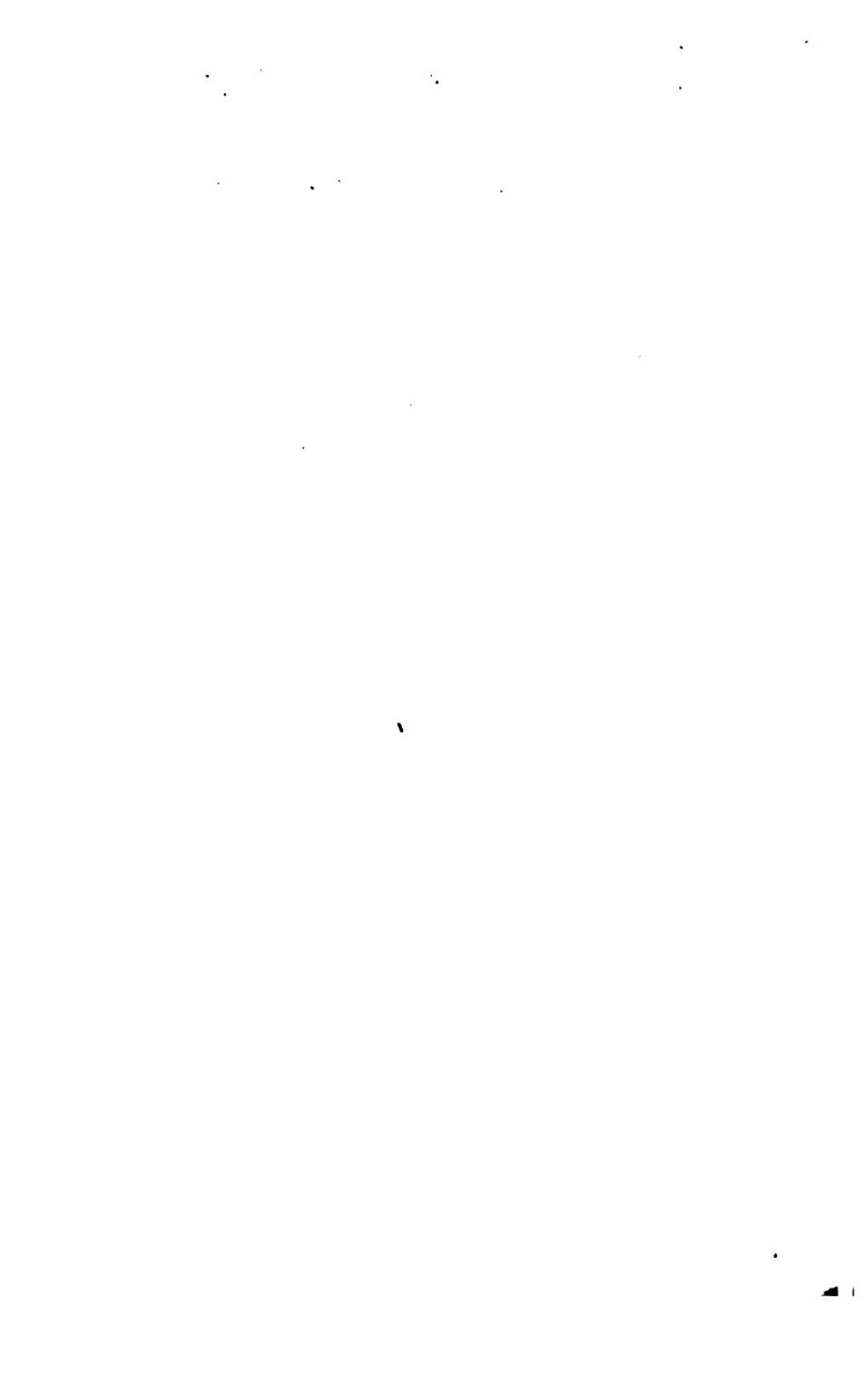
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